

Candid Conversations

with towering persons



K P B H A N U M A T H Y

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K P BHANUMATHY



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*Dedicated to
Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru
First Prime Minister of India*

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Preface

K.P. Bhanumathy has had varied experience in her journalistic career as a feature writer and columnist and, particularly, as an interviewer of the great and the good. She has worked both in print and in broadcasting and it was particularly during her stints with All India Radio in the days before television came to India that she proved her mettle.

The result is a treasure trove of interviews of men and women who have left their imprint on history. They range from such national icons as Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, Homi Bhabha and Satyajit Ray to international path-blazers—Zhou Enlai, Ho Chi Minh, Che Guevara and Olof Palme.

I am delighted that Bhanumathy has decided to bring them together in book form, unvarnished by afterthought. They represent a fascinating source of material for historians and researchers because they tell us what men and women who made history thought in the prime of their lives.

New Delhi

S. NIHAL SINGH

Foreword

It was nearly half a century ago – in October 1958, to be precise – when I first met K.P. Bhanumathy and saw her at work, as a fellow-journalist. The occasion was the annual conference of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which took place in New Delhi for the first, and so far only, time. ‘The Fund-Bank Meet’ we used to call it, and it was invested with the highest importance for obvious reasons. India was then desperately short of funds in general and of foreign exchange in particular, and therefore, needed every penny it could squeeze out of the two financial world bodies. As it happened, at that time this country was also the biggest beneficiary of the World Bank lending. In fact, the genial chief of the Bank’s PR establishment said to me that the bank had temporarily been nicknamed ‘International Bank for the Reconstruction and Development of India’ though he was good enough to concede that it ought to make the terms of its aid to India ‘softer’, which was later done only up to a point.

Under these circumstances it came as no surprise that the monetary czars and custodians of caches of cash belonging to rich and powerful countries were made much of. There was no TV then, only the print medium.

However, the newspapers competed furiously for exclusive interviews with the more prominent of the chief delegates. This was not always easy because these worthies

were kept busy from morning to midnight not only in meetings that dragged on much beyond the allocated time but also at a plethora of lunches, dinners and cocktail parties in their honour. Even so, the enterprising reporters got what they wanted largely because the distinguished guests were not unaware of the benefits of publicity. In the scramble for interviews, Bhanumathy had an edge over others. For, she was interviewing on behalf of All India Radio and honchos of high finance knew that it would carry their voice to the widest audience. Nor was she a novice at the game. She had joined the profession some seven years earlier, writing for an array of newspapers, including *The Statesman*, for which I was working then, on subjects ranging from foreign policy to classical dance. Since then she has come a long way, traveling across the world, covering international conferences galore, writing profiles or obituaries of world leaders and so on. However, interviewing distinguished men and women, especially those with solid achievements to their credit, has remained her forte, and she has always stuck to her self-imposed high standards.

Interviewing people in power and office, especially in extremely limited time, and getting worthwhile copy from it, is by no means as simple as it might seem. Both the interviewer and the persons interviewed have their problems. Some of the latter can be taciturn to the point of the interviewer's despair. Others can be so garrulous and longwinded that the entire exercise drowns into verbiage. Some others—of whom Morarji Desai was the prime example—tend to answer every question by a counter-question.

Bhanumathy, however, has always had the knack of asking precise questions and gently nudging her quarry to stick to the point. Her opening gambit is usually thought

out carefully. I remember one still. At the time of the Fund-Bank jamboree, the world used to speak of the "German Economic Miracle" with the kind of admiration and awe currently reserved for China's phenomenal rise. The author of West Germany's Great Leap Forward was Ludwig Erhard, then finance minister and vice-chancellor and later Chancellor, chased by everyone who had a Press card. "Sir," Bhanumathy asked him, "Are you the wizard? And would you tell us the secrets of your success." The big, burly, brainy and somewhat aloof Erhard was charmed and embarked on a short and succinct discourse on his economic policy.

No wonder then that a selection of the huge number of interviews to her credit over the years forms the core of this book. Its contents are enriched by the erudition and eloquence of the eminent individuals interviewed, and by the author's skill in drawing them out. To mention the names of only a few of the movers and shakers whose words adorn the subsequent pages is to underscore that the choice is impressive to the point of being intimidating. What else can one say about a list that includes almost all Indian Prime Ministers from Jawaharlal Nehru to Atal Behari Vajpayee, Presidents Radhakrishnan and R. Venkatraman, and such towering world leaders as Ho Chi Minh, Zhou Enlai, Che Guevara, Clement Attlee, Aneurin Bevan, Willy Brandt, Olof Palme, Yitzak Rabin, Lee Kuan Yew, Leopold Senghor, and a host of others of comparable stature?

Yet Bhanumathy's emphasis is not on politics and politicians alone. There is also another category that embraces such luminaries as Buckminster Fuller the polymath; the Pakistani Nobel Laureate in physics, Abdus Salam; Vikram Sarabhai; John Kenneth Galbraith; Gunnar Myrdal; and Pierre Cardin. The galaxy of women she has chosen to talk to for the record could not have been more

glittering. Apart from Indira Gandhi, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Begum Liaquat Ali Khan and Mrs. Sun Yat Sun, it includes, again to name only a few, Agatha Christie, Han Suyin, Mrinalini Sarabhai and Aruna Asaf Ali.

It is necessary to recognize, however, that to the younger generation reading this volume—and perhaps even to their elders—many of the prominent persons appearing in the book may be unknown. This is what accentuates the value of the publication. For, it brings to the present-day reader both the essence and the flavour of an era that has gone by but is very germane to the history of the second half of the twentieth century with which we all must be familiar. To go through it, I am sure, would be both educative and entertaining.

INDER MALHOTRA

Author's Note

These are vignettes from the past with exceptional people who represented an epic era. Most of the interviews were conducted for the News Division of All India Radio from the fifties to the Eighties on their visits to India and some on my visits abroad. In view of the interest they aroused, some of them found their way into newspapers.

The collection of *Candid Conversations* would not have been possible if it were not for the diligent efforts of Vijayalakshmi my daughter-in-law who was on a visit, to salvage and put together and catalogue the interviews. She told me that I might find her labours of use some day.

That day arrived later than sooner, thanks to the constant badgering of a close friend who passionately believed that the interviews with yesterday's giants should be available to posterity. I have been encouraged and helped by Nirupama Rao, presently India's ambassador to China, whose persuasion finally made me to take up the task. I am very grateful to her for her unrelenting cooperation. I was also encouraged by other friends especially, Dash Nado Rinchen, ambassador to India from Bhutan. Last, but not least I thank Ganapathy, at present India's Ambassador to Kuwait for his moral encouragement.

I have selected the interviews country-wise keeping in mind their relevance to today's world. I started my writing career early, beginning with short stories during my schooling. They found a place in *The Mail*, *Indian Express*

and *Indian Republic* (Chennai). I trained briefly in social affairs with Mrs Mary Clubwala (late) and Mrs Tara Cherian of the Guild of Service, Chennai. In the fifties I moved to Delhi and worked with Mrs Hannah Sen and Rajen Nehru, Chairpersons of the National Savings Scheme as PRO.

My journalism career took flight in All India Radio, I found a berth in the News Division as a correspondent for Radio Newsreel. During a 10 year stint I had a great time interviewing a variety of exciting men and women from around the world at home and abroad. I am particularly indebted to Syeda Banu Raza the popular Urdu Newsreader, of the fifties sixties and seventies, for her guidance, and introducing me to people who mattered, and the AIR slot.

Many of my interviews such as the ones with Lord Attlee, Atal Behari Vajpayee, Morarji Desai, Ludwig Erhard, etc. have been lost to the vagaries of time. In those days the monitoring department of AIR wiped out recorded tapes for reuse after a period of three months.

From there it was a small step to become a columnist for a variety of national newspapers and magazines.

New Delhi

K.P. BHANUMATHY

Jawaharlal Nehru

The man I most admired, idolized and stood in awe was a remote far away figure. I suppose every school-girl has this kind of vision—reading newspapers, listening to Radio and talk by elders around you, the vision remains an imaginative idol. This idol was Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru leader of the independence movement in India who later became Prime Minister of the country.

I was just a convent school-girl in far away Mangalore and all my dream image was garnered from the Madras Mail and Sunday Times. I used to listen intently when Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya KF Nariman and other leaders discuss politics when they visited our house near Milagres Church near Hampankatta. I used to sneak out from home to join the picketers outside Sujirkars and Kini Jewellers to shout slogans and wave the tricolor flag against foreign goods. Not that I understood what it was all about even when Harindranath Chattopadhyaya tried to explain. All that I was interested was to be among the Khadi-clad Gandhi capped group of young boys and girls.

One day my father heard that I was seen with the picketers and that was the end of my flag waving sloganeering stunt.

I arrived in Delhi in the early fifties and joined the American Reporter as feature writer, later joined the Delhi Indian Express as columnist cum reporter. Shanta Rao, a famous exponent of Bharata Natyam and Kathakali had

been invited to perform on UNESCO Day at the Constitution Club. Sumitra Charatram, President of the Bharatiya Kala Kendra had organized the function to be presided by Jawaharlal Nehru. Shanta asked me to compere the programme – Nehru and his daughter Indira Gandhi were admirers of Shanta. "I did not know Bharata Natyam could be so beautiful," Nehru later commented on Shanta's dance.

It was a makeshift stage and I took position behind the curtain. The programme began well, when it came to the Varnam, 'the piece de resistance' of Bharata Natyam, before I reached the Talam Raga narration I suddenly felt two hands gripping my shoulders with a hard shake, "what are you saying we cannot hear a word out there." Puzzled I turned around. Lo and behold what I saw made me tongue tied—it was Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in person. He took the mike from my hands "do you know the mike has failed", he said as he pulled the switch – "you had switched it off, here take it and start again" with a pat on my shoulder and a smile. I was so dumb struck that I could not utter a word except to stare. Shanta came running backstage crying "what is the matter Bhanu, I can't hear you?" "Nothing, get back", said Panditji escorting her back, turning towards me, "come on start again", I did, Wonder, how?

That was my first encounter with the great man of my country. Later when I joined All India Radio as Newsreel correspondent with the News Division I got to meet Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru many times. Whenever Producer Melville DeMellow or the Director of News needed a message, comment or an obituary I was the correspondent sent on the assignment for prime time newscast. Informing Seshan, P.A. to P.M., that I was on my way, and as I walked in Seshan would say 'Go in he is

free now'. And I always got the same greeting as I entered "Yes young lady what is it now". Relaxed, I would state my purpose. But the feeling of awe and veneration never left me whenever I was in the presence of Jawaharlal Nehru. Will India ever again see such a noble and outstanding leader who can inspire the masses with his charm and forthrightness?

A close experience during my days with All India Radio that lingers in my memory was that morning when I was on board the aircraft with Panditji, JRD Tata, Civil Aviation Minister, Mr. Satish Chandra, press men and other VIPs. It was the inaugural flight of our new Caravelle doing a reece over the Himalayas. Mr. Tata was piloting the aircraft. I was covering the flight for Radio Newsreel. It was a thrilling experience soaring over the snow clad mountain peaks. I heard a voice close to my ears saying "we are over the Hindu Kush," pointing at a snow covered peak almost like a minaret, "and that is the Mansarovar". I turned around and found Mr. Tata sitting next to me. Mr. Nehru was sitting two rows ahead intently looking out.

As we flew JRD was making polite conversation and as the chat turned friendly he asked me "would you like to join Air India? You would make a good public relations officer?" "Oh, no. I would like to work for my government and not for a private company," I replied, and before he could say anything came a firm voice saying, "what are you trying to do; take my people away?" Followed by a hearty laugh from both. Nehru had come to the back rows to meet the rest of us. They were two great men who were the best of friends and had a happy camaraderie.

Will India ever again see such a noble and outstanding leader who can inspire the masses with his charm and forthrightness? As one of his biographers said and I quote "One of the major events of the 20th century and by far

the most significant in its history is the emergence of Jawaharlal Nehru."*

Jawaharlal Nehru was totally committed to the welfare of the Indian people. His foreign policy was based on the dictum of India's interest hence he differed with the US or China's Zhou Enlai. Prime Minister from 1946 to 1964 his untiring efforts to ease all problems social, economic and human after the aftermath of Partition brought him closer to the Indian people.

Nehru along with Gandhiji, Maulana Azad and others brought freedom to India. Although an aristocrat with a western education and high cultural values he sensed the pulse of the Indian people. His views on colonialism and racism made him differ with leaders abroad like Churchill and Lord Atlee. He had a close friendship with Churchill but that did not prevent him from speaking out for his country on their policies. Churchill called him 'the Light of Asia'. The strident bellicosity of the United States' State Department alienated him and he once commented 'Americans seem to imagine that every problem can be solved if there is enough talking and shouting about it, my own view is that a little silence might help.'

Almost singlehandedly he led the country and was considered the foremost statesman of the day. Often he would feel frustrated at the slow progress and hindrance or lack of cooperation from his colleagues. He once told Rajaji (Rajagopalachari) "We seem to have lost all capacity to consider anything from the point of view of a new approach. We go round and round in circles and cannot get out of our grooves".

Soon after Gandhiji's death Nehru was heart broken. Overwhelmed by the tragedy that struck the country, Nehru

* Dr. B.S.N. Murti, '*Nehru's Foreign Policy - 1953*'

in his address to the nation said, "the light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere in our country, the light represented something more than the immediate present – in his death he reminds us of the big things of life, the living truth and if we remember that then it will be well with India."¹

On communal riots he said "If any person raises his hand to strike down another on the ground of religion I shall fight till the last breath of my life, both as the head of Government and from outside."²

Impatient to get things moving Nehru often had to hit a stonewall. He was a man of great dynamism and vision. His close friends say he was a loner which could be true when you are the Emperor of a nation. But he was close to his sister who was almost his confidant, and his daughter, Indira Gandhi. A socialist in more ways than one, he upheld the dignity of Indian society and was eager to make India a modern society.

When he was asked once by a foreign correspondent what he regarded as the greatest achievement under his leadership, he replied "the enactment of measures for the improvement of the conditions of the Hindu women." As far as Muslim women are concerned Nehru felt that the Muslim community may take it amiss and the initiative must come from the leaders of the community.

Nehru's qualities were immense and his popularity abroad was described as a modern imperial Majesty. Kind, warm, humane and humble but in times of stress he could be brusque. Said a foreign correspondent, "There is a touch of greatness in him."

He once told Mountbatten: "If I cannot discharge my

1. 30th June, 1948 – AIR broadcast

2. Nehru – 2nd October, 1951

responsibilities to my people effectively then I begin to doubt whether I have any business to be where I am." On the question of Dominion Status, "I am not a quitter. The mere fact that the situation is difficult is a challenge which must be accepted."

On Congress Party's role "the Congress party workers would have to serve as the link between the government and the people shedding its cliques and bossism and find room for young men and women who have enthusiasm and not money – we progressively become elderly men with elderly ways, interested in small committees and reluctant to go to the people."¹

On Pakistan – "If Pakistan's communal approach and policy prevail in Kashmir it would not only be a tragedy, but it would upset the whole scheme of things in India and of course in Pakistan, we would enter a phase of trying to exterminate each other – I find the Americans and the British people skating merrily on the very thin ice over the deep ocean and accusing us of intransigence."²

I give below some of the comments by the foreign press – *Harpers Mag*, 1956 – "the man who since the end of the Churchill, Stalin, Roosevelt era is the most arresting figure on the world political stage."

New York Post – "One of the most incandescent figures of contemporary history."

Chicago Daily Tribune – "He would lead India as long as he wishes – for better or for worse and his voice will be heard as long as he lives in world councils – again for better or for worse." September 30, 1956

New York Times – "One of the world's most important politicians, and of the unchallenged rulers of the world

1 Nehru to the PCC Presidents, 8 February 1952.

2 Nehru's letter to Vijayalakshmi Pandit – 9 September 1951

perhaps the only one who ruled by love and not by fear."

The Nehru period was a time when most parts of the world was in turmoil Suez, Tibet, Hungary, Korea, Goa, Pakistan and colonialism.

On Suez he tried to mobilize support from all the Bandung countries – "no one could doubt Egypt's right to nationalize the canal," was Nehru's opinion.

On Hungary – he supported the oppressed people behind the iron curtain – "What took place in Hungary was a national uprising which had been brutally suppressed."

Nehru's visit to China in 1954 was described as a 'Roman Triumph.' Nehru and premier Zhou Enlai became very friendly and saw eye to eye with each other. Nehru is supposed to have said that Zhou was like an elderly uncle giving good advice. But Nehru was an independent thinker and often thought differently on the question of India's frontiers and the wrongful delineation on Chinese maps. On pointing this out – Zhou Enlai replied that it was a "historical question and was printed on old maps and some differences were there with the Soviet Union and Mongolian boundaries in old maps as boundaries had not been demarcated."

Nehru later commented "But I wondered how Zhou Enlai would feel if a part of Tibet had been shown as part of India in our maps."¹

Nehru admired Ho Chi Minh, the Vietnamese leader and President. On his way to China, Nehru stopped for a couple of days in Vietnam and met the Viet Congress leader – Nehru said "he came forward almost leapt forward and embraced and kissed me – it was obvious that it was not a

1 Source: *Jawaharlal Nehru – A Biography*, S. Gopal

showpiece. He felt it and meant it. Fine, frank face, gentle and benign – not at all one's idea of a leader of a rebellion."¹

On his visit to China in 1954 –

"I am impressed by China. Having said that, I may also tell you that, having been to China, I am very much impressed by my own country."² "We have to be very very wide awake – there is something all the time which we will have to watch to see that we do not fall back, something to keep us up to the mark all the time."

Later, he told the chief ministers at a meeting – "But I have the strongest objection to India being made a rootless pale shadow of some other country.

"For my part, I believe in parliamentary democracy and in individual freedom. But I also believe that it is essential to have rapid economic progress. We have to combine the two."

1. Nehru's Diary- 17 October, 1954)

2. Address to Congress Parliamentary Party on December 2

I have copiously quoted from S. Gopal's book - *Jawaharlal Nehru – A Biography*

Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi

She was well known in the early days of Independence as her father's hostess. As Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter Indira had many opportunities of traveling to many countries abroad and meeting with world leaders. Politics ran warm in the blood of the Nehru family right from the days of Motilal Nehru and Indira his grand-daughter was a quick learner. Her mother Kamala and aunt Swarup (Vijayalakshmi Pandit) and Krishna were deeply involved in the Independence Movement. As early as 1959 Indira Gandhi became President of the Indian National Congress and in 1964 July 2, she was made minister of Information & Broadcasting. She was just forty six years old at the time.

In 1965 she was awarded Italy's Isabella d'Este Prize for outstanding work in the field of diplomacy. On January 2, 1966, Indira Gandhi was sworn in as interim Prime Minister till the next general elections scheduled for February 1967. In 1967 she was reelected as Prime Minister and leader of the Congress Party in Parliament. In 1978, when she was sworn in as Prime Minister after winning the general elections, she also held the portfolio of Finance.

Indira Gandhi was a symbol of India's unity and secularism. She brought prestige and respect for India not only on the home front but at the International level. She was among the equals of the 20th Century. During her time she also introduced radical changes like abolition of the

Privy Purse, bank nationalization and welfare schemes for the poor. To her goes a great deal of credit for holding the Congress Party as a homogenous whole even though the party had split. Undaunted she carried on as she had the majority of Congress members on her side. Personality and ideological clashes is inevitable in a political democratic system. She was also Finance Minister during her second term as Prime Minister. Her parliamentary victories were so impressive that her followers grew in numbers. Her tactics and timing of hitting back when driven to a corner earned her respect and confidence. An interview with Mrs. Indira Gandhi could be intimidating. Her calm matter-of-fact presence puts you on 'alert'. She can be friendly up to a point, that straight look gives you the no-nonsense warning and yet she was all woman. Indira Gandhi may not have garnered high academic degrees but was of sharp intellect and highly knowledgeable and politically shrewd – perhaps that was to be expected considering her background. She was deeply committed to the welfare of India and its masses. Her commitment to the Indian women was her driving force that helped her to govern a country that was laden with problems on casteist politics and poverty. Frail, almost petite and attractive she had impeccable manners.

Indira Gandhi's tasks as politician, Minister and Prime Minister were immense and formidable but she succeeded in everything she handled. Her grit and determination intelligence and shrewd play of the aces in tackling a crisis were remarkable. Abolition of Privy Purse, bank nationalization and her role in the liberation of Bangladesh were some of her major achievements. Her socialist policies were oriented to the Indian needs and in spite of her busy schedule she would go into every nitty gritty of a problem. Impatient, she was result oriented and would not suffer

fools. She had her likes and dislikes but her pride of being an Indian was her strength.

She never refused me whenever I made the request for an interview. No long-winded eloquence but to the point. Her wide interests and profound knowledge made the interviewers task easy. Be it domestic politics or international affairs, she had her answers to every burning question of the day. On apartheid the hot topic of the seventies, she answered, "Apartheid is a blot on the human race. We must help the African countries to gain independence and to get rid of apartheid in South Africa." They were not mere words. She had actively campaigned for Afro-Asian resurgence. She set up a National Committee for Algeria to assist them in their freedom struggle and a National Council for Africa. Upset by the Chinese invasion of Tibet she was all for asylum to the Dalai Lama and thousands of Tibetan refugees. She set up the Central Relief Committee for Tibetans, it was an all party committee. India's activities on the anti-colonial front and apartheid set the ball rolling for the front line states to resist economic and other sanctions in Africa.

During an interview soon after her return from China in 1954, where she had accompanied her father she spoke to me with enthusiasm of her experience. "I was very much impressed. Everything looked so well planned and clean, the Chinese people are very charming and without prejudices they have a great sense of loyalty, a sense of purpose and are full of enthusiasm and energy" was her reply.

"The first thing one notices in the people of China is the sense of urgency and consciousness in their nation building activities. When I met their leader I was struck by their unity of purpose. They complement one another and speak with one voice, we were struck by their friendliness

and modesty. One couldn't fail to notice their artistic sense in all spheres," she said.

"Were you able to meet people at all levels?"

"At our first reception in China I met representatives from all spheres of life young and old, men and women, it was a wonderful reception. The children looked chubby with pink cheeks and healthy bodies" said Mrs. Gandhi.

"One remarkable thing I found was the day and night crèches which I realized was a great help to the mothers who worked in factories, offices and other places. Women were employed equally with men in all professions."

Politics kept her busy but she still found time for humanitarian causes – Child Welfare was one of her favourite projects. After her return from China she set up Bal Bhavans modelled on the lines of the Palace of Culture in China, with the purpose of bringing within reach of every child whose parents cannot afford to provide facilities to chose a vacation. Later, she told me that an exhibition hall and library will be provided in the Bal Bhavans. "We have very high ambitions."

"Broadcasting needs to be revamped and bring it to world standards especially on the news side it has a very important role to play in the changing world of today", said Mrs. Gandhi, after she became Minister for Information & Broadcasting on July 2, 1964

I was then a Radio Correspondent (AIR Radio Newsreel). We, in the News Division were enthused at her appointment as Minister and there I was at Teen Murti early the next morning to get her on tape for the evening broadcast – "What are your plans?" I asked.

"I want the Radio, press and television to give a wide perspective to our people on a more personal format. Broadcasting could be more factual and have a personal approach like discussions on controversial subjects. TV and

Radio should have programmes for schools. We should have more correspondents abroad. News must be upto date not mere propaganda. Television also should have a wider reach."

On the Films Division she said, "it should be more authentic and represent the traditional and modern culture of our country and not be a copy of the West." Asked about Press freedom, Indira Gandhi said – "many countries have no free press. It will not be so in India but I feel the freedom of the individual is more important and I am for freedom of the Individual, but irresponsible journalism is not to be encouraged." In the fifteen months she remained as Minister for Information and Broadcasting (1964, July to January, 1966) Indira Gandhi brought in many changes eg. Chanda Committee, Press Council Coordination Committee between AIR, Films Div, and the Education Ministry. The International Film festival was her idea. She also upgraded the staff artists and appointed a selection committee.

Keen as she was on promoting Asian – African relations and fighting anti-colonialism, Indira Gandhi played a key role in forging good relations with the developing countries. The Council for Africa was set up at her initiative to foster relations in the fields of literature, economy and politics. African leaders were invited to discuss with Indian leaders over AIR.

Meetings were held with African, Latin American and other states to finalize the modalities for launching the Africa Fund (Action for Resisting Invasion, Colonialism and Apartheid). After the nine nation initiative Meet held in Delhi she set the ball rolling.

During a break in the meeting, Indira Gandhi responded to my question(s). She said – "India had pledged half a billion rupees to the Fund to help the front line states

in resisting economic and other sanctions we will also contribute men & material to build independent infrastructure to help those countries free themselves from the colonial grip. As a leading member of NAM India has an important role to play" adding she said that, "India's role has to be constructive, decolonising and getting rid of the apartheid policies which are humiliating to mankind".

She took personal interest in supervising the programmes of the leaders and established good rapport with leaders from African countries. I was covering the conference for AIR and Mrs. Gandhi asked me to take protocol duties as well with the Uganda delegation led by Milton Obote all because I knew a smattering of Kiswahili.

We were at Palam airport, to see off the delegation who were on their way to Bombay, Mrs. Gandhi, seeing me, in a surprised voice asked, "what are you doing here. Why are you not on that plane?" I did not know that I had to accompany them to Bombay, I muttered, "Oh, no. You must go, get on that plane" she said, and turned to the Chief of Protocol said "take her with you." "But, I have no change of clothes" – I told her. "Don't worry I will take care of that," was her reply. And sure enough when we landed in Bombay Tara Cheria the Governor's wife smilingly whispered to me, "I have a set of clothes for you." Now that was Indira Gandhi thoughtful and prompt action.

Jigme Dorji Wangchuck

Born on 2 May 1921 to King Jigme Wangchuck the second Monarch of Bhutan, King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck-III ruled for twenty years after ascending the throne on 27 Oct 1952. He died at the age of forty four on 21 July 1972.

King Jigme Dorji was groomed for the throne with a well disciplined education in Buddhist literature and English, Hindi and other popular subjects e.g. administration, customs and traditions. He was exposed to the outside world by travel and contacts. King Jigme Dorji's reign was one of farsighted development and competence opening out avenues towards a modern growth while at the same time safeguarding Bhutan's traditions and religion.

At the age of fifteen he was appointed Trongsa Droenyer (Royal Chamberlain of Trongsa) and then sent to India and the United Kingdom for further studies. After his return he was appointed Governor of Paro in 1950, two years before ascending the Throne in 1952.

A small Himalayan Kingdom in the eastern Himalayas between India and China, Bhutan is the size of Switzerland. With magnificent mountains and dense emerald green forests, running brooks and rivers, pure air and impressive architecture, and simple, guileless people it is a *Shangri La*. Highly religious and proud of their traditions the Bhutanese personify a humaneness and simplicity that reflect the influence of the Buddha's teachings. Bhutan is

the last surviving Mahayana Buddhist Kingdom. Rich in natural resources, Bhutan is gradually developing its abundant water and forest resources for the people's welfare. Today more than 54 percent of its population are educated and there is a large number of college graduates.

The development programmes in Bhutan were initiated by King Jigme Dorji along with the abolition of serfdom and the introduction of democratization, codified laws and social reforms. In 1963 a Royal Advisory Council was established with members of the National Assembly to advise the King. The Judiciary and the executive were separated and a High Court was set up in 1968. The First Five Year Plan came into action in 1961. Bhutan became a member of the Colombo Plan in 1962 and member of the United Nations in 1971.

A strong foundation of goodwill developed between India and Bhutan with a close friendship between the King and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian Prime Minister. This relationship grew in strength on a personal level and was extended towards growth and socio-economic development under Bhutan's Five Year Plans. The relationship and the Plan aid programmes have reached the Tenth Plan stage under the direction of the late King's son, the present King of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck.

On a visit to New Delhi, I interviewed His Majesty the late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, "You are known as the father of modern Bhutan. In a country steeped in tradition and religious norms sudden changes from one extreme to another can often have adverse effects and shatter the tranquility and peace of years?"

"I agree this can happen and one has to be careful and move slowly to introduce changes but one can't always live in the past. The world is changing and to survive we

have to face reality. We can't live in isolation," His Majesty said. "I want our youth to have modern education and develop Bhutan for our people's welfare. The changes will conform to our needs and be within the parameters of our traditions and religion."

"How and in what fields can India help or play a role in Bhutan's development especially in your First Five Year Plan?" I asked him.

"India played an important role in getting our First Five Year Plan to a start with road construction in 1961. In fact the total funding for the first and second Five Year Plans is from India," His Majesty said, "India is also helping in setting up an administrative framework. As 90 percent of our people are dependent on agriculture and livestock and 98 percent of Bhutanese are land owners our priority is to develop agriculture and build roads. My friend Jawaharlal Nehru has promised all help, the friendship between us is strong."

Pandit Nehru had a special love for the mountain Kingdom of Bhutan, the only country in the world devoted to the Tantric form of Mahayana Buddhism. A treaty of Friendship between Bhutan and India had been signed in 1949. In 1958 Nehru and Indira had visited Bhutan when there were no motor roads in the country. They had to ride on horseback through bridle paths across gorges and valleys to reach Paro where they were received by King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck and Queen Kesang Wangchuck. It was that visit that prompted Nehru to offer to build roads and bridges in Bhutan. The Indian Border Roads organization has built a network of 2,674 Km of motorable road with feeder roads and suspension bridges linking border towns.

Under King Jigme Dorji's rule the once isolated Kingdom was slowly emerging from backwardness and

exposure to the outside world. When he was asked what his priorities were his reply was, "education, medical facilities, housing and wise use of our natural resources."

King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck was a deeply religious man. To him goes the credit of having renovated ancient monasteries. As a talented artist himself the renaissance of Buddhist art including sculpting, calligraphy and painting was initiated by him. A keen sportsman he was also skilled at archery, Bhutan's national sport.

Jigme Singye Wangchuck

King Jigme Singye Wangchuck-IV, the present King and the only son of late His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck of Bhutan, has been ruling this Himalayan Kingdom for over three decades. His enlightened, pragmatic and wise rule has brought him affection and respect from his people and admiration from the outside world. A very touching loyalty and reverence, almost a special relationship, embodies the Bhutanese and their present monarch.

Born on 11 November 1955, his early education in Buddhist religion and modern schooling began at the age of seven. Later he joined St. Joseph's College in Darjeeling, India. Soon after he went to England for further studies. In 1970 he returned to Bhutan and joined the Ugyen Wangchuck Academy where his education included familiarization with the Kingdom's rich spiritual and cultural heritage. Travels inside the Kingdom and abroad with his father also prepared him for the Monarchy. When his father the late King died suddenly of a heart attack on July 1972 he was unanimously declared as the Fourth Druk Gyalpo (King of the Dragon Kingdom of Bhutan) by the National Assembly. Hardly 17, he was the youngest monarch in the world.

As Crown Prince he was given rigorous training especially by his father on state matters. At 16, he was made Chairman of the Planning Commission in 1971 and a year later he became the Trongsa Penlop, a traditional position

preceding the Throne. He had accompanied his father on his visits to India which resulted in a close friendship with all members of the Nehru family. Indira Gandhi who was fond of the young Prince often said that the young King had the 'wisdom of centuries'. His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck's rule has made possible the stupendous transformation of Bhutan today from centuries of Byzantine ethos. Every detail of planning and implementation was under his direct care. The phenomenal development can be seen in a result oriented infrastructure of roads, schools, hospitals, communication network, national airline, Hydroelectric projects etc. and a literacy rate of 60 percent and a per capita income of US\$ 800, one of the highest in South Asia. Drinking water has been brought to almost all the villages in the Kingdom and health coverage has reached 90 percent of the population. Higher education has been so rapid that it is causing unemployment problems. Bhutan is a working democracy for the people and by the people. 'Gross National Happiness' is the mantra. Its strength lies in the unity of the people and their love and loyalty to the King.

In the year 2005, about 395 students graduated from Bhutan's Sherubtse College and universities outside the country. Where are the jobs? Among them were engineers, doctors, lawyers, IT graduates and others including a number of girls. This is the rapid pace of development and progress in a small country of 716,000 people which 20 years ago was backward and underdeveloped.

A profound wisdom and the highest level of statecraft have helped to preserve the sovereignty, security and unity of the Kingdom. In an age where leaders are known for their desperate attempts to grab and cling to power, a rare and unique decision was made by the King, a hereditary monarch who is at the peak of his reign, to hand over the

reins of governance to the people. The King transferred full executive powers to a newly elected cabinet. There was a strong protest by the 151 members of the National Assembly. Decentralization was a process the King had carefully planned and set in motion two decades ago. In 1981, District Development Committees (DYT) were established to decentralize authority to the district level and soon after Block Development Committees (GYT) were formed. His Majesty also resigned from the Chairmanship of the Planning Commission thus starting the process of devolving his powers.

The King told his council of ministers the day when he handed over power to the executive – “this is a special day for me. I truly believe that the new policies and changes will benefit the nation and the people. I am happy because I know that what I have done is in the best interests of my country and my people”.

In the early nineties, in an interview to this journalist on a visit to Bhutan His Majesty said, “I have always said that the future of Bhutan lies in the hands of the Bhutanese people. Our country is too small and too vulnerable to have its future dependent on a single individual and to hope that we will always have a wise, benevolent and good King”.

Bhutan is at the end of its ninth Five Year Plan and is preparing for the Tenth Plan. Some of Bhutan's finest exhibits are the Chukha Hydel Project, a wide network of roads, the Kurichu Power Project, Basochu Power Project, Tala Hydroelectric Project, Penden Cement Project, a modern telecommunication network and membership of UN organizations. Many of the projects like the hydroelectric and cement projects and motor roads were built with assistance from India. The first large project, the Chukha Hydel Project, was built and funded by India and

handed over to Bhutan authorities lock, stock and barrel by the Indian President Venkataraman in 1988. Achievements have been many and continue earning a place for Bhutan on the world's development and economic map.

His Majesty once told me that he does not want a fast pace of development and modernisation as it may create social problems. "Happy living condition and self-reliance in the basic needs of life within the norms of our culture and religion is what I aim to achieve".

Education is on the priority list. More than 150 Bhutanese boys and girls are studying in Indian universities in the faculty of medicine, engineering, IT, law and other subjects under scholarship schemes from the Indian government. Many more are studying in India through their own funding and a good number are studying in other countries.

"We need India's assistance to reach our goals of self-reliance," His Majesty said. "As far as my people are concerned they should not adopt the attitude that whatever is required to be done for their welfare will be done by the government, on the contrary a little effort on their part will be much more effective."

Indo-Bhutan relations has been consistent, stable and with a close understanding and mutual respect right from the day Nehru and the late King signed an agreement in 1961 on Five Year Plans. Two of the nine Five Year Plans were funded entirely by India. Bhutan has had its own share of problems when in 1990 the ethnic Nepalese population living in southern Bhutan resorted to terrorist activities for a Greater Nepal encompassing part of Bhutan. It was contained by profound wisdom and farsighted statecraft by His Majesty whose mature outlook and competent governance brought the situation under control.

On a working visit to Delhi on 4 March 1996 His Majesty had discussions with Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and other ministers, when the Tala Hydroelectric Project, a Rs. 1400 Crore 1020MW project was signed. In an exclusive and frank chat with this correspondent His Majesty gave expression to his thoughts in a philosophic manner about the trouble in the border areas of Bhutan, which could have had severe impact on the security interests of not only Bhutan but also India. "We have tried our best to contain the problem in southern Bhutan through ministerial meetings with Nepal but no final decisions could be reached," His Majesty said. "I have always said that Bhutan will take full responsibility for any genuine Bhutanese found to have been forcefully evicted but not for everyone in the camps who are claiming to be Bhutanese refugees".

Asked about his views on the Greater Nepal issue, His Majesty said, "This is something that India is also aware of. Every day hundreds of Nepalis are entering into India in search of livelihood adding to the more than ten million already in India – thousands have found a home in Kalimpong, Darjeeling, the Dooars and Assam. 88 percent of the population in Sikkim are Nepalis. All these people one day will agitate for a statehood if the problem is not taken in hand. Bhutan will also be drawn into the vortex. We have a large porous border. We do not have the resources or the security forces to cope with the situation if the game plan for a Greater Nepal gains momentum".

On relations with India, His Majesty said, "our relations are extremely good, we have good understanding on all matters – Bhutan as you know stands beside India in all matters in international forums, India has contributed towards the development of Bhutan in a big way. My country is small, our traditions and our culture are our

strong points – we need to modernize just enough to take our people to self-reliance from backwardness with our own internal resources”.

Three years earlier in January 1993, His Majesty was the first dignitary to be welcomed at Rashtrapati Bhavan on New Year. I had called on His Majesty for an interview. He told me that he had come basically to extend solidarity with the government and people of India at this time when the country was going through a difficult situation (communal violence in western India. Bombay and Babri Masjid episode). “India and Bhutan have through many years developed close understanding and friendship and meaningful benefits,” His Majesty said.

The highlight of the visit was the signing of a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) for a multipurpose project, the 152 MW Sankosh Hydel Project, the tenth largest in Asia. The Dungsam Cement Project and the Kurichu Hydel Project in eastern Bhutan were some of the other projects that were offered under the 7th Plan. Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma the President of India had this to say of his royal guest, “As His Majesty is a longstanding and close friend of India it is a special pleasure to welcome the King of Bhutan to India. The shared sense of belonging is innate to the friendship between India and Bhutan. It is a privilege to be associated with Bhutan”.

In October 1999, I stopped over in Thimphu on my way to Bangladesh. On Tuesday the 5th I called on His Majesty at 11:30 in the morning at the Tashichhodzong. His Majesty looked relaxed. He had just met a delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross on the refugee problem (people of Nepali origin). Twenty eight years of reign to change the face of a rugged backward country to a state of self-reliance with modern facilities, better standard of living and preserve an intrinsic culture

and religious values in an atmosphere of challenges was no small task, yet His Majesty looked as he always did serene, calm and gentle.

Bhutan's first Constitution is ready. Bhutan is in the throes of constitutional changes with the day to day governance brought within the legislative framework and democratic rule.

"Are the people ready for it?" I asked. "The introduction of the Constitution was not an ad hoc or sudden move. It was part of a carefully planned process of political reformation, the outside world may not be aware of it. Today's generation of Bhutanese have been through 31 years of political evolution at the central, Dzongkhag (district) and Geog (block) levels. It is natural that political changes would bring numerous problems but it is important to go ahead and overcome the challenges," was his reply.

His Majesty had initiated the process of decentralization in 1981 and had handed executive power to the Prime Minister in 1998 and recently 3000 local leaders were elected across the country to the DYT's and GYT's. His Majesty said that he had confidence in his people in their integrity, perception and the capability to carry out their responsibility of shaping the destiny of the nation.

"I have been saying for over 30 years that the destiny of the nation lies in the hands of the people. I have always made it clear that the people are more important than the King. We cannot leave the future of the country in the hands of one person – the constitution is the fulfillment of our country's destiny and is placed in the hands of our people."

His Majesty's son the Crown Prince, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck is being given a rigorous training. The young Prince is intelligent and smart. He had finished

his graduation from Oxford University in England and later at Harvard completing his higher studies in political science and public administration. Prince Khesar was brought up like an ordinary citizen without the trappings of royalty or a rich boy. He has received a honorary degree from Rangsit University, Bangkok and has also completed a course at the National Defence College, New Delhi, India.

The Crown Prince is beginning to show qualities of his race and the discipline imposed on him by his father the King. His interaction with the people of Bhutan, his visits to remote areas and villages to explain the advantages and benefits of a constitutional form of government in the years to come with fundamental rights embedded within is being understood by the people. Today the Prince is a familiar and popular figure among the people – soft spoken, his words have a convincing effect as he focuses the welfare of the day to day life of the people. Bhutan had had no constitution but the Buddhist values and the cultural traditions have been the guidelines of governance. Into this background His Majesty in his far-sighted wisdom brought in the concept of Gross National Happiness which today has not only reached the people but has also crossed borders to the world outside. A number of countries have held seminars on the concept and are adapting it as its national goal.

A general election will be held in Bhutan after the General Assembly adopts the Constitution in 2008. His Majesty is firm on his decision to delegate responsibility to the Chhoetse Penlop (Crown Prince) who will be enthroned as the fifth King.

In his address to a ten thousand strong gathering on 17 December, the National Day of Bhutan, His Majesty said, "It is my wish and prayer that during the reign of Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk, the Palden Drukpa will

remain strong and glorious, that our country will achieve greater prosperity with the sun of peace and happiness shining on our people, that all the national objectives of the country and the hopes and aspirations of our people will be fulfilled, and the Bhutanese people will enjoy a greater level of contentment and happiness." Gross National Happiness is the ultimate ambition.

For a young man who had renounced the pleasure and freedom of modern life, King Jigme Singye Wangchuk, from the age of 16 has lived and worked for the welfare of his people. "Have you ever regretted that you have missed out on the fun and joy of your youthful life?"

"No, I have never had the urge for the lighter side of life. My people's welfare and devotion to my duties have kept me happy," was his reply in a very convincing tone.

Loved as a father figure the Bhutanese have protested the announcement of his abdication and that 'Buddhism' instead of 'Drukpa Kagyu' would be the spiritual heritage. "Sooner or later changes have to come and a well planned preparedness is needed," His Majesty has tried to convince his people that the country would face problems if the king reigned for life. It is important for the king to be capable and for the monarchy to have continuity and dynamism. Bhutan's Constitution drafted after serious studies of various Constitutions of different countries is a unique one.

On 17 December 2006 His Majesty formally announced his abdication, handing over to his son the monarchy. Prince Kesar Wangchuk was made the fifth Druk Gyalpo of Bhutan. It was a day highly charged with emotion as the much loved king announced his abdication. Despair and sorrow was much evident as people slowly faced reality. The coronation of the new king is expected to be held in the year 2008.

Ernesto 'Che' Guevara

"Since the legend of Che Guevara grows and that fiercely refined face now appears on the revolutionary ikons of all countries, we should listen attentively to what he has to say."

The Sunday Times, London

Ernesto Che Guevara the legendary revolutionary of Latin America was born on 14 June 1928 in Rosario, Argentina. Born into a well to do family he was known for his radical views even as a boy. His father an adventurous man squandered all his fortune in ship building and growing 'mate', a bitter green tea, which the Argentinians loved to drink. Che (nickname meaning 'buddy', given by his friends) was a sickly child and suffered from Asthma all his life. As he grew up he overcame his physical weakness with lots of exercise and a tough life.

He loved to travel and at the age of 18 he had roamed all over Argentina on a bicycle. He was fond of reading books on sociology, philosophy, mathematics and engineering. His favourites were Freud and Pablo Neruda. He was born a catholic but was never interested in religion. Seeing the terrible poverty around him he gradually was convinced that only a large scale revolution could improve conditions. Guevara had joined school only at the age of seven due to his illness but he was a brilliant student at school and college. He completed his 7-year medical course

in five years. He had been involved from an early age in social and nationalist activities. Filled with a combination of intellectual and revolutionary theory and being an activist he plunged into revolutionary activities to fight for the poor and the oppressed.

Admired and idolized by the young and old he was one of the most feared (by the US) and loved guerilla leader. He was active in the Guantemala revolution. Che first met Fidel Castro in 1955. Having decided to join any revolution against tyranny Fidel and Che trained together under the guidance of a Spanish loyalist and formed a tough guerilla platoon to fight the Batista regime in Cuba. Che's life has been a saga of great events, adventure and suffering. Dedicated to a cause and inspired by Marxist ideas he had his own philosophy born from the needs of the situation. Che had written a philosophical dictionary for his personal use. His highly influential manual on guerilla strategy and tactics and *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War* based on first hand experience tells it all – the 'Naked Truth'. His biographer, John Gerassi, has described him as the Garibaldi of Social Revolution. Imperialism, new colonialism and US policy in the third world was the enemy he was fighting all his life.

After the overthrow of the Batista regime in Cuba, Che was made a citizen of Cuba and appointed President of the National Bank and later minister for Industry but restless at being shackled to a chair and bureaucratization Che left Cuba in 1965 to pursue his struggle against colonialism in the Third World. While fighting in Bolivia he was captured and later killed by the CIA.

Che it is said always knew that the Americans would kill him "wherein death may surprise us, it will be welcome provided that our battle cry reaches some receptive ear that another hand stretch out to take up weapons" he had

written. He believed in a socialist economy and in a Socialist Man.

Che Guevara came to India on 1 July 1959 at the invitation of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, after a visit to Vietnam and other countries. In an interview with the guerilla leader at the Ashoka Hotel where he was staying he spoke on neo-colonialism and under development in the third world. Dressed in army fatigues, paratroop boots a well trimmed beard rather a goatee and a beret he was a handsome man rather withdrawn. It was his dark and soulful eyes that spoke volumes. This was a soulful revolutionary waiting for a spark to ignite the fires. He reminded me of Norman Lewis words – “Guevara invokes a direct humanity that is rarely discoverable in the writings of the fathers of socialism.”

“What brings you to India?” I asked.

Flicking the ash from his Monte Carlo 4 cigar his voice came across low and distinct “I have been traveling on a quest for first hand knowledge in Vietnam and other countries suppressed under the colonial yoke after Cuba was freed from the Batista regime – your Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru invited me. I also wanted a close impression of India’s post-independence plans for its development, we in Latin America have suffered under imperialism and we have to build from scratch”

“You believe in a socialist economy and socialist man. Can you elaborate?”

“We in the under-developed world have to free ourselves from the imperialist yoke, the puppet governments and their armies and the system of exploitation in under-developed countries. We are colonies or dependent countries, with under-developed or distorted development. The objective conditions for a struggle for independence is created by the hunger of the people. A

Socialist Man and a socialist economy can be achieved without being a slave to a foreign power, no under-developed world would ever be able to enjoy the benefit of a corruption-free structure. We, the under-developed must come together."

Continuing he said, "India has won freedom after a long struggle, I have great admiration for Nehru. He will bring economic independence and make India a powerful state. We need to build a society in which all men share the collective spirit of human individual aspirations – neocolonialism grew first in South America and has made itself present with intensity in Africa and Asia. See what is happening in Vietnam and Korea. The brutality in some countries in Asia is in a more subtle form – we in the third world or underdeveloped world have to be united to overcome the machinations of the colonialists and imperialists".

"You are said to be a communist but communist dogmas won't be accepted by a multi-religious society?"

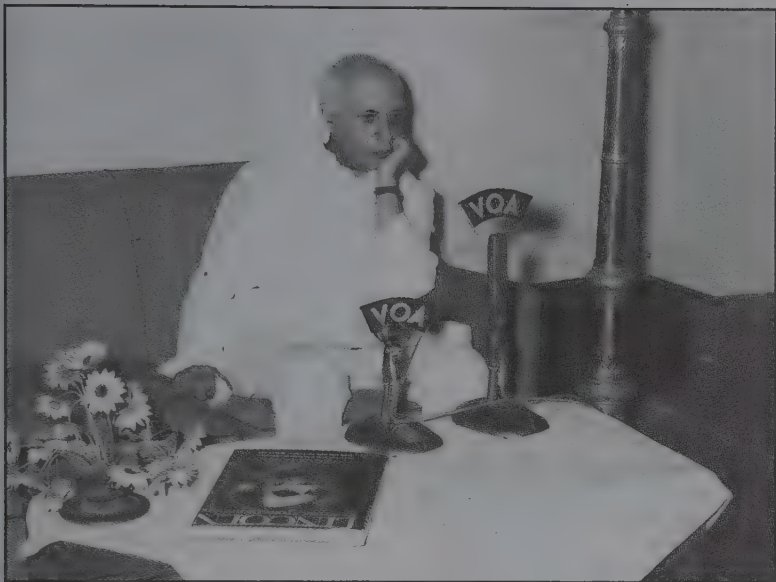
"I would not call myself a communist. I was born as a Catholic, I am a socialist who believes in equality and freedom from the exploiting countries. I have seen hunger, so much suffering, stark poverty, sickness and unemployment right from my very young days in America. It is happening in Cuba, Vietnam and Africa – the struggle for freedom starts from the hunger of the people. There are useful lessons in the Marxist-Leninist theory. The practical revolutionary initiates his own struggle simply fulfilling laws foreseen by Marx. In India Gandhiji's teachings had its own merit which finally brought freedom" was his reply.

His Holiness The Dalai Lama

In 1959, a young 22-year-old Dalai Lama fled Tibet, a Himalayan country, and reached New Delhi after a hazardous journey escaping from his oppressors and invaders of his Himalayan country. An idealist and deeply religious saint-like figure, he was welcomed by Jawaharlal Nehru and the whole country and offered asylum. The Dalai Lama was followed by thousands of his followers who escaped the Chinese oppression and occupation of their country.

The Dalai Lama and his close disciples were housed in Hyderabad House until a proper abode could be readied for them. Later, the Dalai Lama moved to Dharamshala in Mussorrie. The former lean and good looking simple soft spoken man of the fifties is today a mature, wise and few kilograms heavier and more pragmatic. Dreams now shattered and hopes gone remote the Dalai Lama lives in exile striving to keep alive the tenets of Buddha's teachings and religious norms to disciples and followers living in India and abroad who have increased to more than 1,00,0000 and spread to many countries including Nepal, Japan, Mongolia, Thailand, Taiwan, Europe and America. Dharamshala, a hill station in United Province in India has become a pilgrimage centre for Tibetans, Buddhists and others.

Dalai Lama is 72 years old now with a spiritual aura that glows around him. This holy man from Tibet has



Jawaharlal Nehru



Indira Gandhi with the author

Jigme Dorji Wangchuck



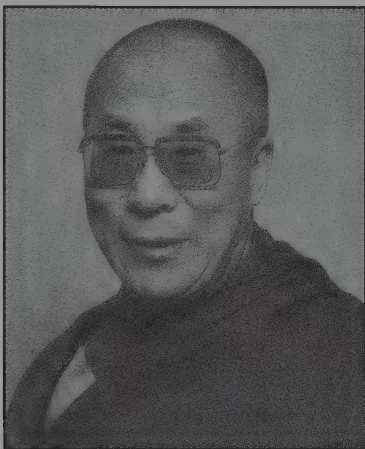
Jigme Singye Wangchuck

Jigme Singye Wangchuck and
Crown Prince Wangchuk
with President of India
A.P.J. Abdul Kalam



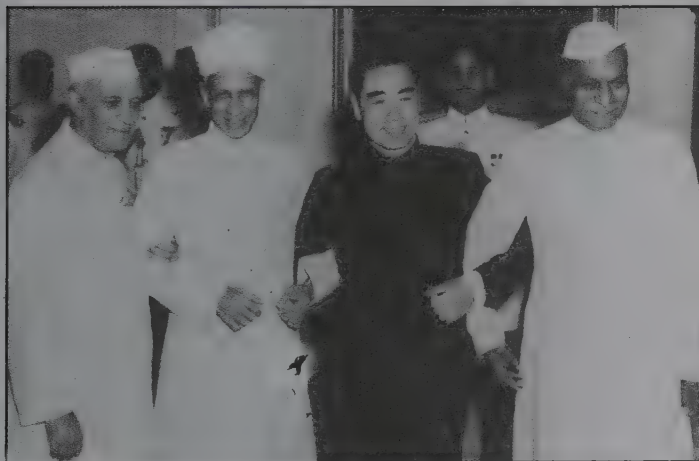


Ernesto 'Che' Guevara
with the author



His Holiness The Dalai Lama

Jawaharlal Nehru,
S. Radhakrishnan,
Zhou Enlai and
Rajendra Prasad



Vijay Laxmi Pandit



Rajiv Gandhi

Ho Chi Minh with Nehru



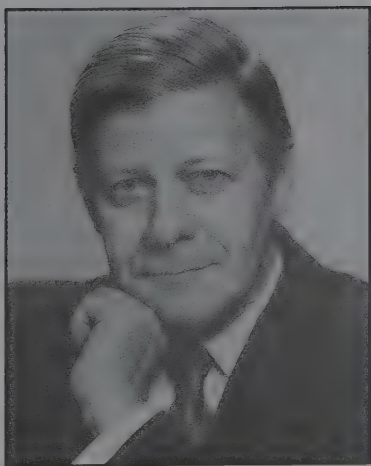


Yitzhak Rabin

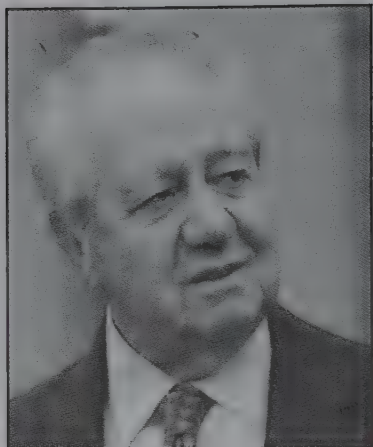
Carlos P. Romulo



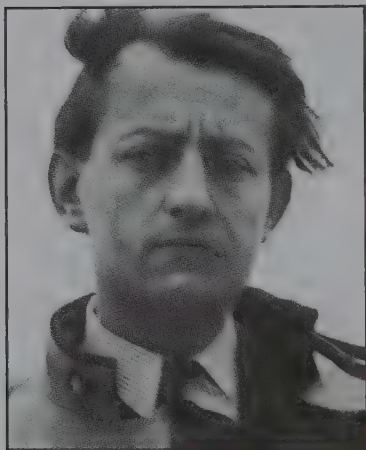
Helmut Schmidt



Mario Soares



Georges Andre Malraux



Olof Palme with
Indira Gandhi





Willy Brandt

Gunnar Myrdal



Ralph Bunche with
Jawaharlal Nehru



Leopold Senghor



Vikram Sarabhai

Mrinalini Sarabhai



grown into a worldly wise, intelligent, knowledgeable, open minded thinker of the modern world. For all the sufferings, the tribulations and loss of country and his people there is no sign of anger or animosity, just sadness, a feeling of hopelessness which he tries to overcome by working hard for his people in India and elsewhere. The Dalai Lama had first met the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in Beijing, and was keen to have a talk with Nehru but was unable to do so. "I was disappointed not to be able to talk to Nehru because I very much wanted his help and advice."* But in 1956 October, the Mahabodhi Society of India had sent an invitation to the Dalai Lama to attend the Buddha Jayanti, the two thousand five hundredth anniversary of Lord Buddha. The Chinese government after an initial no—later relented and gave permission to visit India. To receive the Dalai Lama at the airport was Vice President Radhakrishnan and Prime Minister Nehru. Zhou Enlai was visiting India at the same time and the Dalai Lama had a discussion with him on the situation in Tibet. During the Dalai Lama's meetings with Nehru, the Dalai Lama had expressed a wish to stay back in India, but Nehru advised him to go back.

When things got worse in Tibet and China got involved in Tibet, the Dalai Lama had to flee the country and since then has been living in India. Prime Minister Nehru called on the Dalai Lama in Mussorie in 1959.

One morning soon after his arrival in Delhi fleeing Tibet in 1959 I called on the Dalai Lama for an interview – he looked sad, tired and worried and lost in strange surroundings – he was deeply concerned about the situation in Tibet and the condition of his people. Softly he expressed his thoughts and feelings regarding the situation, "the

* Dalai Lama, *My Land and My People*

situation in Lhasa is very bad. Thousands of innocent people have been killed on suspicion of opposing communism or hoarding money and because of their religion. Women, children and the old including Lamas, thousands are imprisoned. Hundreds of our monasteries are destroyed. I am worried for my people what harm have they done to deserve this."

There was no rancor or hatred or even anger at what had happened and the betrayal, only a benign calmness, a sadness.

"Did he apprehend what had happened?" "Not so violent a form or the cruelty behind it what wrong or sin have the Tibetan people committed," he asks more to himself. "The Chinese claim that Tibet is part of China. They believed as the Kham area and North-eastern Tibet belonged to them – Tibet from 1912 had complete de facto independence – according to the International Commission of Juris", he said.

His holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama was only 24 years old then but had the wisdom of a matured person, compassionate to a fault, even today at 71 he is forgiving and bears no malice. Firmly against any kind of violence his advice to his followers is to demonstrate peaceful protests.

During the interview he profusely thanked the government of India, specially Nehru for the help he and his people were offered.

Speaking for Radio Newsreel – "I know the Indian government will take care of my people who have reached here with great difficulty and suffering. India is the land of Buddha and my people will receive good care." His concern for his people left behind and their future was obvious from his expression and anxiety. And yet one could not help noticing the calmness and self control which was

amazing in someone so young and having lived in seclusion atop the Himalayan abode, a democratic ruler he is the personification of a spiritual ruler without a kingdom.

"Do you expect a reasonable solution soon to the problem and the safety of your people?" I asked.

"The Chinese are not bad, there is hope. I cannot think that they would not negotiate but my people are fleeing Tibet and I have heard horrid stories of the brutality. China wants Tibet and we are a small minority but rich in natural resources. We have been having problems with the Chinese for long and have been trying to reach an understanding with them. After the death of thirteenth Dalai Lama matters became worse. I myself went to China to talk things over for a solution, I wanted no violence no harm done to my people – non-violence was the best course to save my people," replied the Dalai Lama.

Long years have gone by, Tibet today is a far away dream. Might is right, is what one has learned to live with. Since that fateful day His holiness has matured apart from adding a few kilos to his physical appearance and today he is worldly wise with a political awareness, but his spirituality and humaneness and tolerance has brought him widespread respect. His strong faith in the Lord Buddha keeps his hopes alive. India has become a second home to the Dalai Lama and his followers. He has conferred the 'Light of Truth' award on the people of India at a ceremony of the Tibetan Festival of Compassion.

"I never expected the Chinese would invade Tibet in such a manner, as I was given to understand that Tibet being an autonomous region we would be left in peace – Zhou Enlai had assured Nehru* that he would

* Prime Minister Nehru made a statement in Lok Sabha to this effect of his talk with Zhou Enlai.

respect the autonomy of Tibet although it is a part of China and communism would not be forced on Tibetan people. I have great admiration for Nehru and respect him and I accepted his advice to return home," the Dalai Lama told me.

"My people are non-violent and cannot fight a trained army. The non-violent resistance had no effect, all my attempts to reach a peaceful solution had come to nothing."

"India and Tibet have a special *guru-chela* relationship, Tibetan culture and spirituality as developed from Nalanda, Shantiniketan and Nagarjuna has strengthened our relations with India providing shelter to Tibetan refugees," he expressed his feelings.

In an inspiring speech at the nine day festival of Kalachakra Puja in Bodh Gaya in January, 2003 where thousands of the Dalai Lama's followers had gathered from Thailand, Nepal, Sri Lanka, China, Tibet and Bhutan for the 26th Puja the Dalai Lama focussed on the world of today "peace and spiritual values are essential," he said expressing a wish for autonomy for Tibet. "Ahimsa is still relevant. The world has become much safer than the previous century. The desire for peace is stronger."

Today the Dalai Lama is a changed person facing the realities of a current scenario with pragmatism and the long term welfare of his people. The cherubic face greets people with a smile, gone is the sad pained look of the fifties and sixties—receding is also the hope of getting back what was lost. In the interest of his people, the dream of an independent Tibet is renounced, and the hope of leading thousands of Tibetans living in India and abroad in exile back to their homeland.

Ready for better ties with China and resolving the Tibetan issue, living in India for about fifty years after he fled when the Chinese annexed Tibet, today he feels 'China

is best for Tibetans progress and future'. The spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetans has a decidedly long term view of his people's welfare. He has said recently at the 46th anniversary of the uprising in Tibet, "I want to reassure the Chinese authorities that as long as I am responsible for the affairs of Tibet we remain fully committed to the middle way approach of not seeking independence for Tibet and are willing to remain within the People's Republic of China."

It was a heart rending statement coming from a leader who had suffered and lost but it was obvious he had the welfare, happiness and a protective approach for his people so that they may not lose their spiritual and cultural identity. He thanked India for the steadfast sympathy and support given to the Tibetan cause. "I and many many followers of mine have lived in India for 45 years, I feel very much as part of this nation, not only because of the centuries old religious and cultural ties that India and Tibet enjoyed, but also because I and most of my people lived here so long." Mellowed by time and responsibilities towards his community, he is willing to enter into an understanding with the Chinese government.

Zhou Enlai

Zhou Enlai was China's greatest leader a unique personality with a rare combination of many unusual qualities that made him stand out among his peers. An intellectual, great charm and poise with an unshakeable self-confidence which brought admiration and respect from world leaders, Zhou was a brilliant negotiator, a keen scholar and was at home in all subjects including politics of ideology and a conciliator who never lost his cool.

The subtlety of his magnetic personality was his greatest asset. He was tough with a rare tenacity that almost unnerved his opponents. Kissinger after his secret visit to China in 1972 and seventeen hours of negotiations with Zhou was visibly impressed and on his return to the States told Nixon "Zhou ranks equally with De Galle as the most impressive statesman." It was Zhou who brought modern reforms to China and held his party and country together. Zhou Enlai may have been Mao's man Friday but he was the brains and man of action. A communist revolutionary and a Confucian he was also a shrewd realist but a polished suave negotiator. Trusted aide of Mao he was meticulous to details when it came to national interest.

Modern history teaches us that Mao, Zhou and Chiang Kai-shek were cult figures but it is Zhou who is best known admired and emulated in China and the rest of the world. He has been described as the Metternich of his country.

Zhou Enlai was born in 1898 his early studies were in a missionary school and at the Nankai Middle school, an anti-traditionalist institution. It was when he was studying in Japan he came under the influence of Karl Marx. In 1919 he returned to China and joined Nanking University but his rebellious activities got him a jail term. When he was 22 years old he left for Germany, France and England to pursue his studies. Back in China in 1942 he joined Sun Yat Sen's revolutionary Kuomintang Party later Chiang Kai Shek made him chief commissar of his military campaigns. When in 1927 Chiang turned against the communists Zhou managed to escape. During the Long March a six-thousand mile trek in 1927 he came close to Mao who later appointed Zhou as his negotiator to end the civil war with Chiang, after world war II.

In 1949 Zhou became Foreign Minister and Premier of China. Zhou Enlai had played a key role in the South East Asian conference in Geneva in 1954 and the Bandung Conference, the enunciation of Panchila in 1955. To him goes the credit for the breakthrough of Shanghai communiqué that normalized relations between China and the USA.

Zhou Enlai's main ambition was to develop China's strength and status as a major world power. Mrs Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit who had been very impressed when she first met him in Beijing and later at Bandung said "Premier Zhou was a polished and sophisticated man of great charm and one enjoyed talking to him." He had accepted her request to give a fair trial to some missionaries arrested by the Chinese, who were later released.

India China relations began to sour due to border disputes. In 1962, China launched its offensive against India who fared badly in the conflict which was a shock to Prime Minister Nehru who never got over it. Nehru and

Zhou both respected each other and had been good friends after Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was formed. Zhou Enlai's visit in 1961 to India to negotiate a settlement on the McMahon Line – willing to surrender claims to NEFA (eastern region) and accept the McMahon Line in return for Aksai Chin (India would not relent) made the divide wider.

Zhou's midnight Press conference in Delhi during his visit in 1961 held at Rashtrapati Bhavan was attended by large numbers of pressmen, photographers and foreign media. It was influenced by the personality and intellectual acumen of the Chinese leader Zhou who was his debonair self, witty and charming to the last. As the pressmen rushed out at the end to catch the deadline I went up to him interpreting his farewell to the officials and asked him for a special for AIR Newsreel.

"Have I not said enough for one evening (night)?" looking at his watch he corrected himself 'midnight' ?

"May be, but I would like something exclusive for All India Radio" I replied raising my mike.

"Oh, you are from All India Radio? We will have to make it quick as I have to get to the airport to catch my flight."

"How would you sum up your visit?"

"Well, the discussions were thorough. There are no problems among friends that cannot be solved if both sides can reach an understanding. India and China have been friends for more than two thousand years there is an understanding of each others problems but we have not reached any conclusion – problems are meant for solving," he said flashing a smile. Continuing he said – "we have had very frank discussions mainly on border problem. It is slightly hot in Delhi – not inside here, it is very pleasant with so many friends around we will meet again soon –

Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai," with that and shaking hands he left.

A year later China crossed into India with guns booming. Zhou Enlai died in 1976 at the age of 72.

Ho Chi Minh

Ho Chi Minh is the creator of the Vietnamese National Liberation Movement the most important of the revolutionary anti-colonial movement in Asia after World War II. His real name was Nguyen That Thanh – born in the former French Indochina, now Vietnam, on 19 May 1890 in Hanoi. Coming from a poor family he lived his growing years in England, France and Russia from the age of 17 to 23 studying and working. In 1920, he joined the French Communist Party. After the fifth Comintern Congress was held in Moscow in 1924 he became active in the peasants uprising against colonialism.

He went back to Vietnam (North) in 1930 representing the Communist Internal and became President of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party. His life in France had a great influence on him, although he loved the French, communism was in his blood. It was his Bible, his creed and his faith, he would befriend anyone who would help him establish Vietnam into a communist state. The tide turned in his favour when the Japanese in 1945 had overrun Indochina, had to surrender to the West. Ho Chi Minh seized the opportunity of proclaiming Vietnamese Independence. But in 1946 war broke out between the French and the Viet Minh.

It was a seven year long war. Ho Chi Minh's guerillas played havoc on the French. Ho by then had become a master strategist and ingenious at diversionary tactics

which led to the defeat of the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. The two Vietnams were then divided along the 17th parallel. The French government signed an armistice for the independence sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea with USA pledging support to the Geneva agreement.

The Dien Bien Phu victory has been acknowledged in history as a brilliant attack against a bulwark of colonialism. A victory of the oppressed peoples of the world. Ho's ambition was to unite the two Vietnams saying – "A people who wait for assistance of another country do not deserve to be called independent." He had developed into a canny master strategist with the conviction that nationalism if left controlled was a dangerous phenomenon. He had become an expert at exploiting the weakness of the enemy. He lived a dual existence changing his name as he went along.

Concerned at the plight of the people he plunged into the urgent tasks of rebuilding his country on the principle of a true love for the homeland the people and socialism. But war broke between the two Vietnams in 1959 with the Viet Cong attacking the South – it was a long bloody war lasting nearly thirty years. Ho Chi Minh's diversionary tactics and mastery in the art of political skills shrewdly manipulated the Americans, the Russians and the Chinese. It is said that he used the Americans to his own ends. President Nixon in his book *Real Peace – No More Vietnams* has said, Quote – "Ho Chi Minh played the Americans for sucker".

Ho Chi Minh won the war in April 1975 but was not alive to see the hoisting of the National Flag of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. He died of a heart attack on September 3, 1969. But Ho had won a unique victory not only over the French but over a powerful nation, the USA.

It was not war all the time. Being the humanist he was, Ho involved himself a good deal in reconstruction and cultural and artistic work telling his people that it should serve as a weapon. "Culture and art is also a front and you are the fighters in this front". When he became President in 1954 he refused to stay in the President's House but stayed in a small house nearby.

Ho Chi Minh was a poet and a prolific writer and author of numerous books. 'His Prison Diary' consisting of 100 poems is one of his popular books:

*"The body is in jail,
But the spirit never
For the great cause to prevail
Let the spirit rise for ever."*

Ho Chi Minh came to India in February-March of 1958, to meet Nehru and to try develop close relations with India and promote an understanding of the situation in Vietnam. Indian political parties led by the Congress Party set up relief welfare committees to help the Vietnamese war victims. On an appeal by Vietnam doctors, medical supplies and other necessities were sent to Vietnam. The Vietnamese leader created quite an impression with the Indian Communists and freedom loving people for his relentless liberation fight against colonialists.

During his visit to Delhi I met Ho Chi Minh for a brief interview for All India Radio. The great fighter against the mighty American forces with the adeptness of a Chanakya was a small thin, kindly man with eyes writ with pain but determination stood in contrast. Aggressive he was not, and bend he would not. "We Vietnamese have a tradition of ardent patriotism and will fight against foreign aggression. We are a heroic nation and want our nation to be free from exploitation. First it was the French imperialists

then the Japanese and now the Americans" was how he started the interview.

"Vietnam has suffered much under the colonialists rule, now our people, the peasantry, the working class and the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia are in a state of transition into a national Marxism – Leninism doctrine, a kind of scientific socialism achieved through revolution."

"We have heard that you trained young cadres to imbibe the national and patriot spirit through education by your writings"?

"Yes, in order to build communism and socialism we had to get our people together as a close knit organisation. By 1929 our revolutionary movement became a conscious movement and the core of the national liberation movement. Until the South is liberated our duty is not complete," was his reply.

"Is that why you refused to accept the award The Golden Star of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam saying to wait until the South is liberated and the homeland peacefully united?" I asked.

"Yes. Not until the North and South are reunified and our Southern compatriots allowed by the National Assembly to give me this lofty medal."

"The war has taken a heavy toll and continues so. Death and suffering has been heavy what are the prospects of the war coming to an end soon?"

"The Americans are using Vietnamese against Vietnamese, our people have suffered long, but our Vietnam will be reunified, national reunification is the road to survival. Our great unity, our political struggle against the US, the French or the US imperialists will end in victory, we may have to go through more difficulties and hardships but we will win", was his emphatic reply.

"You have paid great attention to build bridges of

cooperation with Asian countries what do you expect from India?" I posed the question.

"Countries like India, Africa and Latin America have suffered under the imperial and colonialists yoke. Those struggling against colonialism in any form for national independence are our friends and Vietnam wants friendly relations and understanding from peace loving countries to the preservation of peace in Asia. India has had its share of struggle to free itself from the imperial yoke, it is a common struggle and we have a common bond. The Indian people understand our struggle and have tried to help our people's suffering.

"I have heard groups of women led by Mrs. Indira Gandhi have collected medicines and funds to help our cause. There is a lot of sympathy and understanding for our problems." was his rejoinder.

"Having become President you gave up the post of Secretary General – with a war on who leads the party and the army?" I asked.

"Our people are our strength. The working class are the most heroic and most revolutionary class and there is solidarity, our cadres and party members are united into a solid vanguard, we will win and drive the colonialists and the aggressors out."

"Let every one and every branch

Emulate one another

Every day.

We are sure to win

The enemy is sure to lose."

was his answer.

"You are a poet author and writer how do you find the time?"

"Writing poetry comes naturally. It is an outlet for a worried mind and a way of expressing one's hope. Writing

is a way to reach out to our peoples, our cadres have to be educated and informed," replied the Vietnamese leader with patience.

A communist or a socialist what ever, he was a patriot. A dedicated man Ho Chi Minh also wanted the friendship of fraternal countries and progressive people of South East Asia.

Vijay Laxmi Pandit

India's first Ambassador to Moscow was Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, appointed 24 hours before the actual transfer of power on August 14/15 – 1947. She was also the first woman to be elected to the UN General Assembly as President in 1953. Earlier, in 1949, she was appointed Ambassador to Washington. She also held the post of High Commissioner in London for seven years in 1954 and again in 1959-61. Sister of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, Vijayalakshmi Pandit was involved in the freedom movement under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi from 1932. Born on 18 August 1900, she plunged into the political movement along with her father, brother and other members of her family. She has had her share of jail-going and the turbulence of a freedom struggle.

She was a member of the Allahabad Municipal Council for a start, and in 1939 became a member of the UP Assembly and was appointed Minister for Self-government, Medical and Public Health. In 1946, she led a delegation at the behest of the Indian government to the United Nations at Lake Success. The delegation comprised of high level statesmen, bureaucrats, politicians and an ex-Chief Justice, all men led by a woman. The Indian delegation was to protest against discrimination against people of Indian origin in South Africa, known as the Ghetto Act of South Africa. It was the first delegation to the UN from an

independent India. Field Marshal Smuts was Mrs. Pandit's formidable adversary. The Indian Resolution won by a two-third majority.

On her return, she later told a journalist "through the years the Human Rights Commission has become a debating society where members are content to score a point or two and then relax until the next session." How true, even today.

She was a member of the first Constituent Assembly. In 1952, after having won a seat in the first general elections. She led a delegation to China. In 1962-64 she became the Governor of Maharashtra. Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit was an extraordinary woman, beautiful, intelligent with an impressive personality, great charm and sophistication and a simple person in private life. She was married to Mr. Ranjit Pandit a barrister and had three daughters. She won a seat to the Lok Sabha from her brother's constituency after his death from Phulpur, UP in 1964.

Mrs. Pandit was very popular with many of the leading personalities of the world who were impressed by her magnetic charm and sincerity of purpose, many were her close friends like Winston Churchill (he may not have been a friend of India but liked Mrs. Pandit), Mahatma Gandhi, the Roosevelts, John Foster Dulles, the Mountbattens, Zhou Enlai, Mao Tse Tung, Dean Acheson, who asked Mrs. Pandit when she was Ambassador to USA "Why do pretty women want to be like men?" She shot back "they don't, they only want equal rights and privileges, Mr. Secretary of State and I insist on having mine."

Mrs. Pandit had received a number of awards from many universities in England and America, the earliest was Doctor of Laws from Oxford University.

I first met Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit soon after her

return from China in 1951. The thirty-six member delegation comprised of writers, politicians from all parties, academicians, scientists, artists and women social workers. Those were the days of Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai. Those days China was not very popular with many countries of the world, but India's connection went back to more than two thousand years and had an Ambassador in Peking (Beijing). The month long visit of the delegation was very popular and successful. Mrs. Pandit looked very happy at the outcome of her visit and her talks with Chairman Mao Tse Tung and Premier Zhou Enlai.

"It was a very useful and enlightening visit. We went to many places, saw a large number of projects under development, factories, rural areas, schools but what was amazing was the cleanliness all around and people all busy with some occupation. People were well informed. This was not through press or radio but word of mouth. Even in schools students were taught on a person-to-person level and not by books alone. It was an education on nation building, how the new China must become a great country."

"English was taught in all schools," continuing further she said, "grown up men who had missed out on education were enrolled in the People's University." About her meeting with Chairman Mao, Mrs. Pandit said, "I was very impressed with him, he was very much different from the real Mao, we had heard about, he was very friendly to the point of being jovial, informal and very knowledgeable especially on India and our culture. It was a pleasure talking to him."

In 1953, Mrs. Pandit was elected to the Presidentship of the United Nations General Assembly, succeeding Mr. Lester Pearson of Canada. She was at that time living at Teen Murti House with her brother Prime Minister Nehru.

Mrs. Pandit was the first woman President of the August body. I met her for a chat for Radio Newsreel (AIR). She was flooded with congratulations from all over the world, largely from African and Asian countries. The gracious lady looked unperturbed and calm, her usual self.

Having had some experience earlier of the working of the UN she had an air of confidence and poise. "What was your reaction when you first heard of it? "Not very surprised, as my brother had hinted to me earlier that India would contest, naturally I was happy, as a delegate to the UN earlier I have some experience and I take it as a challenge. I am familiar with the rules and regulations and have many friends in the organization Dag Hammarskjold, the Secretary General is a friend of mine. I also feel it is an honour for India to be elected to the 8th session of the General Assembly of the world body."

"What keeps you active, are there some issues more important than others?"

"Issues are always present in the agenda but relatively the work of the President of the UN is less demanding but there are responsibilities - I have to preside over committees and play the role of appeaser with member states who are in conflict. The social rounds take much of one's time as many heads of states and VIPs visit New York," said Mrs. Pandit, "I traveled a lot to many countries including meeting many heads of states in Asia."

Two significant achievements during her Presidentship was UNICEF being made a permanent part of the UN and the other was expansion of the Technical Assistance Programme for underdeveloped countries.

Mrs. Pandit spent seven years as High Commissioner in the U.K., was also accredited to the Eire of Spain, apart from being a successful envoy she was popular and made a large number of friends. She frankly admitted when

asked which of her postings she enjoyed most. "London, as I knew England well. I never had any difficulty in understanding the British mind. I had a free and close relationship. I felt at home in England," was her spontaneous response. "But I missed India. I wanted to come back."

And I quote from her book – *The Scope of Happiness* – "The two reasons that the Empire died gracefully were Gandhi and the British recognition that the time had come. No other colonial power did or could have done this even with a Gandhi to point the way." She was made Governor of Maharashtra after her return from U.K.

It was on 2 August 1968, on a flight to Bangkok that I got closer to Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit. We had been invited by Prince and Princess Prem, Ambassador of Thailand in Delhi to visit his country. With us was Nayantara Sehgal, Mrs. Pandit's daughter and Anjani Mehta, DG, Tourism. The three days in Bangkok were hectic. Mrs. Pandit was to address the National Council for Women. It was a packed hall of men and women. The subject was 'Status of Women in post-independent India.' The audience soon after Mrs. Pandit's lecture came up with questions. I, Tara and Anjani were sitting together. A questioner posed a query on family planning, I heard my name mentioned, Mrs. Pandit was saying – "I am going to ask Bhanumathy, one of my adopted daughters to answer the question." I was flabbergasted, used only to questioning not answering. I hesitated, "come on. You can answer from where you are sitting" coerced Mrs. Pandit. I answered rounding it off with statistics, but today I can't remember what I said.

Nayantara is a wonderful lady, gentle, intelligent with a lot of dignity, an excellent novelist, writer, author of ten books and a political journalist. Shy to the point of

self-effacing she is very modest. Rita, the youngest was also a friend of mine, very different from Tara, lively, exuberantly talkative, sociable and active and independent. She was frail in health and died young.

Although Mrs. Pandit lived when she was a member of Lok Sabha in the same building as I did, Western Court, we did not meet often as she was busy in Parliament and preoccupied with politics in the mid sixties. Her differences with her niece who was PM at the time made her decide to resign from Parliament.

When the Party split, she joined the Congress. She felt she was being sidelined when Indira was Prime Minister, after Lal Bahadur Shastri's death. "I felt, a barrier growing between us, I was unable to have a friendly conversation with her." The Emergency of 1975 brought a parting of ways – said Mrs. Pandit. She went into self retirement in Dehradun. She had good innings right from the forties and perhaps a quite life was a need.

Rajiv Gandhi

Rajiv Gandhi, Prime Minister of India from 1984 to 1994, was one of the youngest prime ministers in the world. He was just 41 years old.

"India is an old country but a young nation, I am young and I too have a dream. I dream of an India—strong, independent, self-reliant and in the front rank of nations of the world in the service of mankind," said the tall handsome Khadi Kurta Pyjama-clad Rajiv Gandhi with a dimpled smile lighting up his face. Full of ambition for his country, an idealist who was catapulted suddenly to lead a nation as large as India soon after his mother's death on 31 October 1984.

Despite personal grief and the terrible shock he accepted the responsibility with dignity and great poise. Accepting the people's mandate the charming young man with impeccable manners donned the mantle with dignity and a determination that despite his inexperience of the tumultuous complex politics of India. Destiny had pulled him into the vortex of politics as General Secretary of the Congress Party soon after his brother Sanjay's death in an air crash in 1980. He had won a by-election and became a member of parliament. In 1984 he again won in the general election by a huge majority from Ameti, UP, after his mother's untimely death.

A pilot by profession he was happy at the controls of an aircraft. During a brief meeting in those days I asked

him if he enjoyed flying? "I certainly do, it is a feeling I cannot describe," he had replied. Politics was far from his mind, rather he was interested in science and engineering, classical music and photography were his hobbies. A product of Doon school and Trinity College, Cambridge, UK, Rajiv Gandhi later moved on to Imperial College to study mechanical engineering. Born to Indira and Feroze Gandhi, Member of the Lok Sabha (parliament) and Managing Editor of the Indian Group of Newspapers, he married Sonia whom he had met in England in 1968. Father of two—Priyanka and Rahul—he was a fond husband and father.

Rajiv Gandhi was loved by the people for his accessibility and his concern for the poor. He immersed himself into his job with all seriousness, diligence and commitment. One of his early assignments was the organizing of the Asian Games in Delhi in 1982. He streamlined the functioning of the Congress Party. He was active in parliament in enacting Bills on social measures, tax evasions, political defections and lessening controls on the economy from obsolete rules. Focus on education and removal of poverty was one of his main aims.

His visits abroad brought a good response and good will. As Prime Minister his interaction among the world leaders left deep impressions and response. As Chairman of the Non Alignment Movement he had hosted a summit and later a six Nations Meet that introduced the six-nation Delhi Declaration on Nuclear Disarmament. In 1985 evoking the setting up of a multilateral machinery to monitor disarmament, he said, "Nuclear war will mean death of a hundred million but the extinction of four thousand million the end of life as we know it on planet earth."

Addressing the UN General Assembly in 1985 he

stressed on the need of non-proliferation of nuclear arms and against racism. "In the nuclear age there is no iron clad guarantee against the use of weapons of mass destruction – peace which rests on the search for a parity of power is a precarious peace," he said. At a Commonwealth Meet of Heads of Governments in Nassau he reiterated India's support against racism to South Africa and African countries. India as a signatory to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, Rajiv Gandhi asserted active cooperation on promoting economic relations and a close understanding.

When I asked this young Prime Minister, "Are you enjoying your new role?" the answer came with a smile, "Yes, I enjoy everything I do as long as I do it well. People of India have given me a job and I must do it well in the interests of the country and people."

Inaugurating the 6th All Indian Convention of Air Traffic Controllers on 13 October 1984 he stressed on flight safety and the need for close cooperation between pilots and air traffic controllers. Criticizing bureaucrats who try to push up non-technical and the less competent at the cost of efficient and qualified professionals he said, "A high level training and more refresher course to handle sophisticated equipment is needed. We also need to evolve a system to suit our environment and not neglect the human aspect,"

My early memories of Rajiv Gandhi was of a boy eight years old, playful, shy and fond of his younger brother Sanjay. One afternoon I was at the Teen Murti House interviewing Mrs Indira Gandhi for All India Radio in the front lobby when suddenly there was a shriek and sound of running feet in that silent house. We both turned around surprised; there was Rajiv and Sanjay shouting and running towards the stairs. "Good god, what are you two

up to" demanded Mrs Indira Gandhi, their mother. Taken aback they stopped and meekly tried to walk up the stairs—shoes caked with dirt and stained shirts – "Look at them," she said turning towards me, annoyed she admonished the two boys. "Tuck that shirt in Sanjay and you two go up and clean yourselves," as Rajiv walked up and Sanjay bounded after him.

Years later I met Rajiv Gandhi at a party given by the Malaysian High Commissioner Mr. Razali Ismail for a delegation of women legislators from Kuala Lumpur. Rajiv Gandhi, then the General Secretary of the Congress Party, was the chief guest of that evening. As the guests were enjoying their drinks and food out on the lawns I found Rajiv, Sashi Kapoor the film actor and Razali huddled in a corner of the drawing room immersed in a serious conversation. Joining them I found the subject was Amitabh Bacchan, our famous film star. It was all about his accident. Sashi Kapoor had just come from Bombay to the party after visiting Amitabh in the hospital and was narrating the details of the accident. Rajiv Gandhi was a close friend of Amitabh, in fact family friends. Rajiv looked worried and concerned and keen to know Amitabh's condition. He seemed very upset and anxious – I had only seen this young man always smiling and cheerful – this, perhaps was the real Rajiv Gandhi who cared and loved. As the evening drew to a close I suggested softly that it is time to leave. 'You think so?' he asked. "Yes," responded Shashi adding "or you will find all the women making a beeline for you," a typical Shashi banter.

The next time I met Rajiv Gandhi was on the morning after he was sworn in as Prime Minister at his Safdarjung residence. The place was overflowing with well-wishers. His close aides had suggested that I carry a bouquet of red roses, presumably his favourite flowers. Not too comfortable

with large crowds I found a quiet corner on the outer fringes of the garden. Rajiv, with his familiar charming smile, was accepting greetings and good wishes with personal attention to one and all. As he moved around he saw me and walked towards where I was standing, his security and crowds following. "Why are you standing so far away?" he asked accepting my good wishes. His smile deepening, "what is it you are hiding behind you?" he wanted to know. I brought my hand forward and offered the red roses to him. "Is this for me? Thank you, they are lovely" he said. Beckoning to the hovering photographer he suggested, "let's have a photograph". I was happy but tongue tied and self conscious at the attention I was getting.

That was Rajiv Gandhi, a warm friendly human being, simple, uncomplicated, charming and modest—modest to a fault. No wonder he was loved and so popular.

Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated on 21st May 1991 by a LTTE suicide bomber masterminded by LTTE leader Prabhakaran at Sri Perumpudur in Tamil Nadu where Rajiv Gandhi was presiding over a meeting.

"Whom the God loves he calls them to Him."

Yitzhak Rabin

November 4 will ever be remembered as a black day in the annals of history of the Middle East, the day when 73-year old seeker of peace, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, was shot by a mindless Jewish fanatic at a rally on the steps of Tel Aviv's City Hall. Condemnation of the dastardly act came swiftly from all world leaders, European, Asian, Arab and African. A staunch promoter of the peace-process in West Asia, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's funeral was attended by more than a hundred heads of State and Governments to pay tribute to this exemplary warrior of the 20th Century.

Rabin was a much respected and trusted man even by his erstwhile enemies. The presence of the PLO representative and heads of Morocco, Egypt, Qatar and Oman Governments to bid him farewell was proof of his esteem. A touching remark made by King Hussain of Jordan moved many at the funeral and brought tears to the eyes of all present. It also denotes the future prospects of a Middle East to live in peace and harmony, keeping alive the memory of a brave man who was a war hero and hero of peace. King Hussain described Rabin as a friend brother and a fighter for peace and made a pledge to "work for peace as long as I live".

Yitzhak Rabin was no ordinary man, a man of grit and steel with a softness that made him sensitive to problems of others. The former Chief of the Israel Army and a 1993 Nobel Peace Prize winner (he shared it with

Yasser Arafat), he had played a strong and effective role in bringing peace where hatred and violence existed for which he paid with his life. Yet this man, who fought a victorious war in 1967 with Jordan, Egypt and Syria bringing Gaza and the West Bank under Israeli rule after retiring from the army embarked on a Mission of peace for the survival of his country in 1992. Many in Israel were puzzled at his new role; some opposed his efforts and some criticized him harshly.

The famous Washington Declaration set forth a trend of events towards a peace process. The only Israeli-born Prime Minister, Rabin started his military career at the age of 18 and rose to become the Defence Minister in 1984. During an uprising by the Palestinians of the occupied territories in 1987 the soldier-turned civilian proved that he had lost none of his soldiering qualities. He was tough with an 'iron fist' and quelled the uprising. Later he was equally determined in pursuing peace. "What is the alternative"? To enlarge the list of people killed? To let terror and violence rule? The only intelligent way to solve this situation was to reach peace without endangering our security," was his reply when Mira Avrech, a foreign correspondent, asked him soon after he signed the Washington Declaration, as to what he was going to tell a bereaved mother whose son was slain by terrorists.

A break had been made earlier in 1979 when a peace treaty was signed with Egypt and last year King Hussein, the then Israeli Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, and Rabin had come closer to each other resulting in a peace and economic agreement after 46 years of conflict.

During September this year, Rabin had agreed to hand over large parts of the West Bank to the Palestinian Authority and freeze settlements.

When Rabin became Prime Minister in 1992, he made

an offer to Arab leaders for talks. Thus began a series of meeting with Arafat, King Hussein and others. The Washington Declaration signed on September 13, 1993 set forth a trend of events towards peace.

The crusader for peace in the Middle East is no more, but his values, principles, his vision and sincerity will be kept alive by Shimon Peres, the acting Prime Minister and architect of the Peace Formula, and other leaders. But there is some fear of the Likud, led by Benyamin Netanyahu, creating problems which can be contained only if the Labour Party comes back with a majority in the 1996 general elections, when, for the first time, a Prime Minister will be elected.

Rabin's attitude towards India was a pragmatic one. He admired India's culture and spirituality. The slain Prime Minister was also fond of Indian cuisine and often entertained his guests at "Tandoori" restaurants in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv run by the Pushkarnas (Indians).

What lingers poignantly in my mind is the interview he granted me at a short notice during my visit to Israel. It was my friend Mira Avrech, journalist, social-political columnist and author, who made it possible. It was a late evening; two hours later I was to catch a flight. I was at Mira's apartment when I mentioned to her that I would have liked to interview Prime Minister Rabin. "Why didn't you tell me earlier, let me see what I can do. May be you could ask him a few questions over the phone," she said and dialed the Prime Minister's number.

Here are extracts of the interview relayed through Mr. Oded Ben Ami, the Prime Minister's spokesman:

"Peace with our neighbours is our ultimate aim based on the Washington Declaration of Principles, all terrorism must end and we will have to pull out from the West Bank but Israeli interest cannot be compromised. We have already

fulfilled the first phase of our agreement giving away Gaza and Jericho. As for moving settlements, absolutely No. A freeze would be necessary, and as far as Jerusalem is concerned it will never be divided again. It will remain under our sovereignty."

"All Palestinians living inside will be protected by Israel. We cannot drive them out. We will protect our settlements. All inhabitants, Christian, Jewish and Arab will be allowed free movement. Of the half a million population inside Jerusalem 350,000 are Jewish and 150,000 Arab, nearly 10,000 Arab residents of East Jerusalem have asked for citizenship, this is a sign of our desire for co-existence."

On Golan Heights: "It is a thorny issue. We will have to withdraw in the interests of peace, but we will have to leave a military presence behind."

On Lebanon: "We are there in what is called 'Our Security Zone' as the Lebanon Government cannot prevent terrorism, our settlements will have to be protected."

"The biggest obstacle towards attaining peace is terrorism; once peace can be established, terrorism can be contained. This is our policy. Our main threat comes from fundamentalism, Jewish or Palestinian. Hamas is the major terrorist group that poses a security threat to our daily life. A significant fact in our peace process was our accord with Egypt in 1979 and last year with Jordan."

Opposition to Yitzhak Rabin's peace efforts inside Israel was growing and doubts were expressed if the Labour Party would win the 1996 elections. Rabin's assassination should now put to rest all doubts with a surge of sympathy wave within the country. Much progress in the peace process has been made with Rabin conceding to hand over new settlements in the occupied territories to the Palestinians and assist them in reconstructing their economy.

"We want to have a Jewish State and not a bi-national state," Rabin had said.

A taxi driver from the West Bank operating in Jerusalem said: "We want to live in peace that would ensure us economic security for our families. I am an educated young man and I cannot drive a taxi all my life. One day I would like to own my own taxi service and that cannot be without peace."

Acting Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who was the driving force and architect of the peace formula, said to Mira Avrech: "The Middle East should not be Zero-sum game where one side gains what the other side loses. In my strategy I want to provide more for everyone."

This sums up the man who will don the mantle of Rabin the peace maker, and guide the peace destiny of the Middle East.

Carlos P. Romulo

"I am now 70 and I know that the twilight of my life has been reached. I feel that in my span of life I have not done as much as I wanted to do," said Dr. Carlos P. Romulo, Foreign Minister of the Philippines.

This is a remarkable understatement made by a man who has occupied a conspicuous position on the world stage and whose role in his own country is best illustrated by two books written by him entitled *I saw the fall of the Philippines* and *I saw the Philippines rise*.

Dr. Romulo has been in turn an educationist, author, soldier and a diplomat. More than 25 years ago he was ADC to Gen. MacArthur. He rose to the rank of Brigadier-General before he entered politics.

The end of World War II brought him to the United Nations, first as head of his country's delegation and later as President of the General Assembly. He was twice elected President of the Security Council.

He made the transition from one field to another with surprising ease. He started life as a teacher and rose to be the head of the Department of English in Philippines University and a member of the University Board.

From teaching he turned to journalism. The war zone in East Asia was his beat and for his brilliant dispatches he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. In his role as a journalist he advised President Manuel Quezon's war Cabinet functioning from Washington from 1943 to 1944. Those

who have heard him know his skill as an orator who holds audiences spellbound .

He has received 50 awards and decorations from various countries. More degrees have been conferred on him than he can remember.

But neither his successes in various fields nor the limelight of public affairs has cloyed his idealism or the essential simplicity of his life. He rises at five in the morning, does his exercise (Japanese calisthenics) and swims. Whenever he finds time, he plays with his nine grandchildren. "Another one is on the way, and so I number them as nine and a half," he said with a chuckle.

Dr. Romulo said that the best years of his life were those spent in the University of Philippines. "To deal with youth is to deal with tomorrow and the world is shaped more by tomorrows than by yesterdays."

Looking back, he said: "As Robert Frost said, I have many miles to walk and in this walking I hope I can leave at least some milestones useful to my country and the world." His countrymen have implicit faith in him. He was recalled by President Marcos from retirement and appointed Foreign Minister. "May be, I have not yet done my share of work for my country."

Dr. Romulo is intensely interested in India. He is President of the Gandhi Centenary Committee in the Philippines. "He does not belong to you alone. He belongs to the whole world," he said.

Way back in 1940 he interviewed Gandhiji as a correspondent of the *Manila-Philippines Herald*. The manuscript of his book on Gandhiji, *The Living Christ*, was lost when the Japanese burnt down a Press.

As an Education Minister, he instructed that all schools in the Philippines should discuss the life and works of Gandhiji.

Helmut Schmidt

The former West German Chancellor was surprisingly pleasant and friendly unlike the impression one has about the Germans in high places. He was also an able politician and economist who had a knack of getting things done with his charm and friendly ways. As Federal Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany from 1974 to 1982, he was a Chancellor of the people with down to earth ideas. The ivory tower was not his habitat. True, he was the first to deploy nuclear warheads in Europe although he was no warmonger, "just to maintain a balance with the might of the Soviet Union".

"Normally, I don't give interviews when I am out of the government. I don't like it. I would not like to embarrass my successor and it is not fair to him," were the opening words which ended in a long chat on different issues. Seeing my disappointment, Mr. Schmidt asked me to sit next to him at a small party at the German Embassy on February 16, 1984, when he was on a visit to India at the invitation of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi with whom he was on friendly terms.

The 'chat' covered a range of subjects of the eighties – On Population Explosion – "It is one of the biggest obstacles that comes in the way of removing poverty. Any economic measures can be effective only if the population growth is overcome. It is impossible to prevent deterioration in the national environment unless we stop the population

explosion, social stabilization cannot be avoided. The population has not only affected the developing countries but has affected national economies in Europe and North America as well – in fact in all industrialized countries we have to ensure that the world's natural resources and the earth's ecological system remain capable of meeting the needs of the expanding population at a tolerable economic level. The situation will not resolve itself unless a determined family planning policy is undertaken like China has done. By 2000, 16 years from now, some 6,300 million will live on earth, in the next century it may explode to 12 to 15,000 million. No development aid will be sufficient to meet the needs," he said.

To a question on the Nuclear Race and missile development, Mr. Schmidt replied – "Russians made a big mistake by showing off their military superiority and breaking off talks. We do not believe in an equilibrium. When negotiations did not come to anything we decided to have a balance – I do not believe there will be a war and tensions have not risen due to military superiority, tensions mostly emanate from other reasons, an understanding can be reached by continued discussions or the West stationing their forces to maintain a balance. It was I who first decided to deploy nuclear warheads in Europe although I was not for confrontation, a balance had to be maintained if others are not willing to see reason."

Growing eloquent on the North-South issue, he said, "In a way I do not like the expression North-South, when you use this expression to include the Soviet Union. Does it not give Development aid? It is an highly industrialized country, the North is heterogenous, is the South homogenous? What about Saudi Arabia? Is it part of the South? A dialogue has been carried on, but what is lacking is an economic analysis of the North and South do not

influence the economic mechanics, no one seems to want to acknowledge the economic upheavals brought about by the oil producers. A few in the South have benefited from the oil prices but it has been detrimental to others in the South and the North. Grouping of the North and South is not desirable though it is understandable but not enlightening – at the same time people are responsible for the price explosion. Are the South poor countries? Are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE poor? Do you know?" he queried back. "There are 12 million people out of jobs in the OECD countries. Protectionism is on the rise everywhere – the inflation of the American dollar was responsible for the collapse of the Bretton Woods system. Calls for a new economic system will have no meaning. The industrialized countries will have to learn that the integration of the developing countries into international division of labour. The Soviet Union cannot remain in isolation, the balance of payment deficit of oil-exporting developing countries is rising. There are no patent recipes for future cooperation – too much propaganda and talk and less economic analyses is causing the whole trouble. I do not believe in loudspeaker propaganda. A realistic outlook is necessary between North and South," was the long exhaustive reply.

"How do you view relations between India and Germany?" I asked.

"Very good, they are normal and friendly. We in Germany have great admiration for your leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and now Indira Gandhi." Suddenly standing up – he remembered about his time and date with Mrs. Indira Gandhi – saying 'Wieder Sehen' he got into his car.

The above 'chat' was the 'Schmidt recipe for ills'.

Olof Palme

Dr. Olof Palme, Former Prime Minister of Sweden was a close friend of India and personal friend of Jawaharlal Nehru, Indian Prime Minister and his daughter Indira Gandhi. Mr. Olof Palme has also a personal connection with India. One of the daughters of his great grand parents was married to an Indian, Dr. Upendra Dutt. In 1953 as a student Mr. Olof Palme had attended a seminar in Mysore led by Dr. Zakir Hussain. His Indian connection is also sentimental in the experiences he had during his travel in India in the company of a sociologist. During his travels he had visited many villages in South India and Rajasthan. He traveled by bus, lived inside a temple premises and slept in schools in villages. This experience had not only left deep impressions on him but also influenced his growing years which grew into a special love for India.

Thirty years passed and it was only in 1985 he was able to visit India after that early encounter. Later in early 1986 when he came for the ICDSI conference that he was able to relive memories of Rajasthan and other places. Mr. Olof Palme was the Chairman of the Conference on Disarmament and Security issues. He was also a member of the Brandt Commission. A gentle and soft spoken person he was against all forms of violence. But his death came in a violent form. He was shot dead by an assassin as he was returning home with his wife one night after watching a movie, in February 1986.

Mrs. Lisbeth Olof Palme was specially invited to India in 1987 to receive on behalf of her late husband the 1985 Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International understanding. It was presented by the President, Mr. Zail Singh. The late Swedish Prime Minister was also awarded the Indira Gandhi Gold Plaque and the Unity Award for Peace. The Unity International Foundation presented the Unity Award for Peace in 1986. A road has also been named in New Delhi after him – the Olof Palme Marg. While receiving the award at a function attended by a distinguished gathering at Rashtrapathi Bhavan. Mrs. Lisbeth Palme was overcome by emotion. She said, “when he left Sweden for India last year he was in a melancholy mood but when he returned he came back full of hope. Like Indira Gandhi he saw the world in a broad perspective”. Olof Palme was a political personality and an international favourite, rather controversial. He was a Social Democrat. Born in an upper middle class family, he had a political science and a law degree from Stockholm and the USA. In 1963 he became Minister without portfolio – in 1965 Minister for Transport & Communication, Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs in 1965, and in 1969 Chairman of the Social Democratic Party and Prime Minister of Sweden until his assassination in early 1986.

When I met him in 1986, just before his death, I asked him, “Tell me something about your Indian connection.”

“I became deeply impressed by the quiet dignity of the people here. It is here that so much of the future is decided. I will always carry a bit of India with me. India and Sweden have old historical links when Swedish ships sailed to Indian harbour and in the 19th century missionaries worked here. In the 20th century bilateral relations have developed well in two fields on the international level and on the economic front – today in

shops in Sweden you can buy Indian products in fact there is a shop near my house and they have a good number of Indian handicrafts and other material," said Dr. Olof Palme.

His admiration for Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi was very strong. During the conference he took time off to deliver the Indira Gandhi Memorial Lecture (1986). "I found Mrs. Gandhi to be a political leader of outstanding quality. She combined political acumen with a clear intelligent mind. She was a person of great warmth and personal charm," he said. "The friendship that had existed between Jawaharlal Nehru and former Prime Minister of Sweden, Tage Erlander was the base for a growing friendship between Indira and Olof Palme and later Rajiv Gandhi. Said Mr. Palme that he and Mrs. Gandhi had a common base of shared values and I am happy to continue this relationship with Rajiv Gandhi. I admire him. He almost saved NAM and his initiative to bring together the six nations was a good idea."

"On the Conference on Disarmament and Security of which you are Chairman would you like to comment?"

"This meeting here has brought to the surface many problems and has enabled us to clear the atmosphere. When we met last year many issues were discussed. The Test Ban Treaty, regional security are some of the topics we have for discussion. The need to strengthen the United Nations has dawned on us".

I interrupted to say – "but your report has been criticised as Eurocentric and not much attention had been given to the problems of Security in the developing countries?"

"This is unfair," replied Dr. Palme, "people from developing countries think a bit hastily but we have to start from the realities of the world. It is the developing countries that have pushed the UN to make the world aware of the

realities. The criticism was a bit of misunderstanding. We have to jointly strengthen the United Nations to make it a global instrument of peace. We have found out that there have been 140 wars since 1945 in the Third World. We have to find measures how to prevent this from recurring."

As a member of the Brandt Commission he had an active role in the Socialist International. He also headed the Palme Commission on Disarmament. Being an anti-colonialist and anti-communist he was active in Third World politics.

I asked why the Brandt Commission floundered?

"Oh, that was an unfinished business."

"And the Gorbachev offer?"

"It had special significance as it was a obvious change in the Russian stance on the concept of common security. Gorbachyov's attitude was promising and there were many proposals for eradicating nuclear weapons. Since 1945 there have been 1500 tests and as we had said at the six nation summit here, these tests are simply not acceptable to the World. The call from New Delhi last year that nuclear tests must come to an halt must be heard the world over", was his candid reply.

Dr. Palme referring back to the Brandt Commission proposals said – "the proposals have not been realised, the debt of the developing nations has increased five-fold and there is an urgent need for political initiatives aiming at a comprehensive and long term strategy. This should be based on the recognition that all parties, developing countries and industrial countries through their own actions have contributed to the situation in which we find ourselves."

Mario Soares

Who is Mario Soares? What a stupid question? I thought and walked away questions like that need no answers.

Know anything of European affairs and you know of Mario Soares. Heard anything of Social Democrats, third world politics or Portugal? Mario Soares was the hero of social democracy in Europe of the sixties, seventies and early eighties. Born in Portugal, a country where the dictatorship of Salazar was at its worst and ruled supreme fascism was at its height, Mario Soares, very early in life, as a school boy, began to experience prison life for rebelling against the system. Not keen on studies, his political instincts made him join the Youth Movement. Mario Soares's life has been one of life long struggle for a democratic life for the Portuguese.

Mario Soares was born on 7 December 1924. Portugal was in turmoil. It had fought World War I on the side of the Allies and was slowly emerging into a modern colonial empire when Salazar's rule introduced dictatorship. Portugal remained under dictatorship for nearly fifty years. But there was unrest and free democrats were active to bring in a democratic rule. Mario began to emerge as a student leader, his name figured in the political police list often. Active in the Democratic Youth Movement in 1949 he organised his first political campaign. Later he was banned from Portugal.

After his return to Lisbon Mario Soares and friends

started the Portuguese Socialist Action in March 1973 to create in the minds of the people an ideological framework of democratic socialism. Earlier in the sixties he had begun to make contacts with the Socialist Trinity of Europe – the three leaders of the socialist international – Austria's Kreisky, Germany's Willy Brandt and Sweden's Olof Palme.

Portugal in its history has never had a political party. A party founded in 1875 had been banned. In 1955 Mario Soares and his friends formed the Socialist Republican and Socialist Resistance, which later became the Socialist Party before the Revolution. It had not much links with the outside world. By 1969 Mario Soares had become an important leader of Socialist International and a third force was born in Portugal under him. Portugal had come out of isolation, the world and the UN were attracted to Mario Soares. He emerged as an International figure, a man to be reckoned with. The Trinity of International Socialists, other world leaders including the British Prime Minister welcomed him. The political ghetto that the Portuguese had lived in all these years broke loose. Mario Soares was the 'Man of the Day'. Soon the world recognized the meeting of 1976 in Portugal preceeding the socialist party's victory. Mario Soares soon became Prime Minister. Earlier as Foreign Minister in 1974 he was considered one of the most successful Foreign Ministers having brought about a change on the face of Portugal ready to accept challenges. Under his leadership, within five years, Portugal became a fast growing modern welfare state, a growing economy and a member of the European Community.

A popular and competent ruler, world leaders began to call on him, including Britain's Queen Elizabeth II. He soon became Vice President of the Socialist International founded by Karl Marx in 1864. Olof Palme and Willy Brandt became his good friends. Olof Palme even organised a

meeting for him in Stockholm to meet all the leaders of neighbouring countries. Mario Soares started a revolution in Portugal to free the people from the tentacles of fascism. A man much loved by the masses, his popularity extended beyond Europe to the far away countries under the colonial yoke. He was looked upon as a symbol of social democracy, an idol of the third world and considered as the most respected leader of the Socialist International.

Mario Soares was a pleasing personality, a smile creasing his cherubic face when he met people. Re-elected three times as Prime Minister to him goes the credit for decolonising a number of African countries. Portuguese he was, but he never forgot that justice is for all. He was given the Human Rights Award for bringing democracy to the African colonies and Portugal by driving the communists out. He was much liked for his frankness and sincerity of purpose that brought him close friendships with world leaders like Leopold Senghor, Mitterand, Harold Wilson among others.

In the first Constitutional election held in Portugal in 1976 he was elected defeating the communists. He has led the country to a parliamentary democracy – no small achievement considering Portugal's long history of Fascism. Spínola once remarked: "Mario Soares has become the interpreter of the feelings of freedom of the Portuguese people. An impressive speech maker and crowd puller he had a rare quality of convincing people more so on democratic socialism which the Portuguese labeled as 'SOAISM.'

As President of Portugal, he visited Delhi in January 1992 as the Chief Guest at the Republic Day celebrations. This was long after the war for Goa's liberation between India and Portugal in early 60s. In fact much water had already flown under the bridge by then and many of India's

VIP's had visited Goa effacing bad memories. Mario Soares had called on Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. When the Portugese President came out after the meeting with Mrs Gandhi I asked him "How was the meeting and what did you discuss? Did Goa infect the atmosphere?"

"Oh No. No sour feelings, we are friends. India and Portugal are going to get along well" was his cheerful answer the wide smile dimpling his cheeks.

India and Portugal have come a long way in bilateral relations. Trade, economic, industrial and technical cooperation between government and FICCI & ASSOCHAM have moved forward.

With no bodyguards around and the ostentatious paraphernalia surrounding a President he said, "peace and friendship can be brought by loosening of tensions and a pragmatic approach, we are going to cooperate towards building understanding and friendship between our countries. Many of our problems are similar as the country and people move forward these problems can be sorted out. You have a very intelligent and remarkably poised Prime Minister with grace and charm," he said of Mrs Gandhi. "We got on well reaching an understanding of the situation, friendship and cooperation can be brought about by diplomatic actions and a willingness to cooperate, India is a practicing democracy, we in Portugal can learn from India," was his disarming reply.

I was not surprised by his *bon homie*. The Portugese have an old world charm and a special knack for dispelling clouds and bringing cheer to the environment, this was my experience on a visit to Lisbon and Oporto as a member of President Narayanan's Press Party in September 1998. They are friendly not overtly, charming a little aloof, and sincere without being overbearing. Democratic norms have seeped well into the Portugese psyche. No haughty

mannerisms but, 'we are friends' attitude.

"I have seen you before, welcome." It gives the feeling that the war over Goa in 1960-61 never happened, I thought basking in the warm and hospitable environment. President Narayan's programme was thoughtfully planned. A statue of Mahatma Gandhi was unveiled in Restelo by President Narayanan. Later a banquet was hosted where many prominent Indians were present, a friendly and homely function without the trappings of imperial grandeur. The Indian community living in Lisbon or Oporto seemed happy and contented and doing well in business, "we have no problems, business is good and there is scope for more" said Jethalal Kanji Radia head of the Kanji group. Relations are on an even keel, after the signing of the Treaty of Commencement of Diplomatic Relations between Portugal and India on 12 December 1974 by Mario Soares and Y.B. Chavan, Indian Foreign Minister, especially after a host of visits by Indian Prime Ministers and foreign Ministers.

Later when Vajpayee visited Portugal the two countries had agreed to build a coalition of interests to meet challenges of the 21st century including efforts to contain terrorism jointly.

A real charmer his long meeting with Indira Gandhi our Prime Minister on a five day visit to India in January 1975 where there was a congenial and warm atmosphere (as if there had been no war between the two countries). Dr Mario Soares was the first high level official to visit India since the liberation. He won over the Indians with his charming personality and friendliness that paved the way for relations between the two countries with the hatchet buried.

Georges Andre Malraux

Who was the real Andre Malraux or Col Berger—France's famous but enigmatic much read novelist, publisher, explorer, philosopher, guerilla leader, a fighter pilot, archaeologist or freelance adventurer?

Around the world he was well known and admired for his writings and as poet and archaeologist, a protagonist for peace and goodwill relations. His archaeological activities landed him in his early years in jail for smuggling Khmer art out of Angkor Wat, Cambodia. His third novel *La Voie Royale* (The Royal Way) appeared after the jail episode. A non-conventional by temperament he had an urge to get into situations as a nonconformist early in life. Malraux joined the French Resistance tank corps under the code name of Col Berger and yet in 1922 he refused to join military service on a pseudo pretext.

Self-taught, leaving school half way he acquired knowledge from books and lessons from life. At the age of twenty he became known as a ingenious critic and a poet. He started writing from 1920 and was also his own publisher. By 1925 Andre Malraux was drawn to Mao's philosophy at a time when he was appreciated as an intellectual of high caliber. His eternal search for the meaning of life often landed him in danger.

Strangely, despite his leanings to the left he refused an offer by Trotsky a membership of the Communist Party. Not much later he became an admirer of Chiang Kai Shek

which resulted in a stupendous book considered one of his greatest, the *La Condition Humaine* (Man's Fate) he was awarded the 'Prix Goncourt.' He was not even thirty years old.

Malraux joined the Spanish Civil War in Spain against Fascism, leading a squadron of Bombers on a mission. The Spanish Civil War gave him material for another book—*L'Espoir* (Man's Hope) which was later adapted for the screen, that became a classic. When World War II broke he joined Charles de Gaulle and was underground with the French Resistance. He was captured but escaped, later was appointed Minister of Information and Culture in 1958 and served for more than ten years. A heavy barrage of criticism had surfaced at the time as de Gaulle was considered a Fascist and Royalist but Malraux was a great admirer of men who were nationalists and patriots. Ideology was not a means to an end with him, he was an admirer of de Gaulle and was a favourite of the General. His books had brought him so much appreciation and fame and were read by all sections of the populace in France and other countries. His work *Les Voix du Silence* (Voices of Silence) a rather controversial tome was a massive study of all art forms and is deemed as a classic.

Andre Malraux's heroes were Mao, de Gaulle and Jawaharlal Nehru and to quote Malraux—"Each hero or saint or sage stands for a victory over the human situation," and to him those heroes were the three men. Malraux has been described as a strange man loved and disliked and much admired. This may be because according to people who have met him, few have tried to understand his metaphysical philosophy. I am inclined to agree after having met him in New Delhi. I found him reticent and withdrawn but the next moment he was all charm pleasant and open minded.

I had met Andre Malraux when he came here to receive the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding. Mercurial, he was aloof, a bit haughty and a brooding composition of many moods and poses. Not an easy man to interview his mind and speech gets switched off fast until you provoke. "I am happy to receive the award in the name of Jawaharlal Nehru. I am an admirer of Nehru, a great man who cared for his people and worked for world peace. It is an admirable quality," he said to me.

Having been to India a number of times, "whenever I travel in Asia, India is a country high on my agenda. My first visit was in 1929. India and its civilization enchants me. The arts, the culture, a beautiful country with rich variety, but a strange country too large to understand in a short visit. Your leaders efforts to win friends and bring peace led by Gandhi and Nehru needs to be emulated by those countries fighting for freedom," he said. Neither a smile not a light remark emerges as he looks intently as I ask, "Did you derive inspiration for your books from the tough experience you had during the war years?" "Yes certainly, but at the end of it all I find it was unimportant and useless. Life-science and art are more satisfying," was his answer.

Born a catholic but soon turned anti-cleric, Malraux was not a Marxist or communist but it is said that he approved of the communist system. There is no doubt that he played a crucial role in thwarting the communist attempt to gain control of the whole of the Resistance whether in France, Germany, Algiers or South Africa, says his biographer, Jean Lacouture.

"Have you read my books?" he queried. "I cannot read French but have read some of your translated works," I answered. "You speak English well," he said with a hint of a smile, "Most Indians do," I responded.

"You are right I have observed that well when you asked me the question. Yes, my writings are largely based and retold from the experience of life and it has not ended. I am still in search of the meaning of life. I have tried to unwind thoughts into words. I find relief in expressing the feelings of the world around me. India inspires me. There is so much to learn and admire from the world around you. You have good writers of history here. I learnt much about India from Nehru's writings."

Before I could put another question Mrs Indira Gandhi walked in saying, "Bhanumathy you are taking too much of Mr Malraux's time." "Oh no we are having an interesting chat," he intervened, his blue green eyes crinkling into a smile as he said, "*Au Revoir*".

Indira Gandhi, like her father, admired Andre Malraux but later during the Bangladesh war the relationship turned sour. The man who was on a roller skater run all his life visiting trouble spots was keen to join the fighting in East Bengal or set up a guerilla warfare unit. Mrs Indira Gandhi advised him to wait and see how things go. Later on her return from the US, she stopped over in Paris. Andre Malraux called on her at the Indian Embassy and repeated his request to get him to Bangladesh during the crucial stage of the war in 1974. She again advised him to wait till things cool down. Mrs Gandhi's main consideration was his frail health as he was in his seventies.

Disappointed Malraux walked out muttering, "that woman," as he left the Embassy.

What was Andre Malraux a famous man, Minister of de Gaulle's cabinet, a crusader, a great writer, art expert of the highest caliber, an intellectual, a twentieth century hero or an enigma? Or was he a myth? No. He was a legendary hero, a man in quest of situations in life.

Andre Malraux was born in 1901 and died in 1976.

Willy Brandt

Herr Willy Brandt former Mayor of Berlin (1957-60) and Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany (1969 to 1974) said when he took over office "Democracy can be successful only if it is supported by the democratic commitment of the citizens." These words are more applicable today than ever before in any of the democracies of the world. Willy Brandt was a social democrat to the core of his being, he was Chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Germany from 1964 to 1966. Foreign Minister of West Germany from 1966 to 1969. As a socialist his finger was on the pulse of the German people. Favoured by the people, he had introduced some down to earth popular policies that brought him credit.

In the early fifties he was Editor in Chief of *Berliner Stadtblatt* and during the Berlin crisis in 1958-63, he kept the morale of the people, against pressure from East-Germany and the Soviet Union, under control and built up a united front and introduced democratic reforms. As a leading member of the SPD he was the popular leader in German Ostpolitik. Willy Brandt was the fourth Bundeskanzler, he was 55 years old and it was the first time that a social democrat was elected in 39 years to that high office in Germany. Ninety-one years ago on October 21st, Bismarck had banned social democracy as a threat to the public. Brandt had earlier contested twice to the Chancellorship, in 1961 he was defeated by Adenauer and

second time by Erhardt.

In 1966, when he was Foreign Minister he was also the Vice-Chancellor, it was during this period that the social democrats began to play an important role in government. Brandt's popularity rose at home and abroad, the SPD became the people's party. He was largely responsible for uniting the two Germany's together. Brandt had then said, "no further estrangement within the German nation." In 1970, he had crossed over to the East to meet the GDR Premier Erfurt for a dialogue.

Brandt was a workaholic, he shied away from cocktail parties. An intense person, work was a serious business for him. His working class beginnings stood in good stead when dealing with people. The SPD was his lifeline. As one of the trinity of the Socialist International (other two were Kreisky & Palme) "I was born to it," he often said. In his growing years in Lubeck he was an active trade union leader and socialism became his creed.

Born on December 18, 1913, he was named Herbert Karl Frahm and was brought up by his grandfather. After attending a national conference meeting in Dresden during 1923 (it was a secret meeting) he changed his name to Willy Brandt, he was 18 years old then. Although *Das Kapital* was his favourite book he once had told a friend – "that it had not turned him into a dyed in the wool Marxist." Considered as the best dressed, good at cracking political jokes and friendly, it was easy to like him hence his popularity.

He had fled from the Nazis to Norway and worked as chief of the Norwegian – Sweden Presse Bureau he returned to Germany in 1945 after the collapse of the Hitler Reich. Brandt's interaction with the European community was not only a boost to Germany but many other countries. The Socialist International led by Brandt and others was

focusing on North-South relationships whose principal leaders were Olof Palme of Sweden, Bruno Kreisky of Austria and Mario Soares of Portugal – all of them later became heads of their Governments.

Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik won him high credibility at home and abroad with leaders for his sincere efforts to channel aid to the third world countries.

Largely responsible for the resurgence of the Socialist Democratic Party, Brandt was the symbol of post-war Europe. Honest and sincere, he speaks his mind in almost convincing way. No wonder, after he was elected Chancellor, the press screamed, "A new era had begun."

Willy Brandt was better known in the third world for his Brandt Commission report, a voluminous document on development assistance to the developing and under developed countries. The report envisaged a plan to aid developing countries bringing the third world economic and social security through an interconnection with the developed world.

During a visit to Delhi Brandt told this writer that – "In countries of Asia we are being heard – regional cooperation in South East Asia is a beginning for building bridges with India, Indonesia and Pakistan. Cultural links with Germany needs to be promoted. We also have good relations with Africa. Germany has always tried to steer clear of internal conflicts in Asia and Africa, with a divided Germany we are concerned about our future and how to equal among de-equals in Africa and Asia." He added – "not having been a colonial power we have no hang-up's this makes us confident of building trust and friendship with the developing world and help Asian and African countries to stand on their own.

Willy Brandt was a strong believer of disarmament and a peace policy, pleading for a strong balanced non-

proliferation treaty – “we want détente, disarmament and peace, a non-intervention policy and mutual respect.” Today the third world is in need of development aid, it is not charity they are seeking nor showcase projects, but help for self-help, the developed world also benefits, that in the long run its exports, markets and jobs for the jobless.”

Totally against nuclear weapons he strongly advocated for non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, “The world does not need nuclear weapons, in Germany we shall not have nor do we want such weapons,” was his vehement argument. The North-South divide was his prime concern and at every opportunity he condemned the large gap between the developed and the underdeveloped and one could see that he was not patronizing.

Unfortunately the Brandt Commission failed to take off.

Ralph Bunche

Dr. Ralph Bunche was on his second visit to India as Under Secretary General for political affairs in the United Nations. Born in Detroit (Michigan), a Negro himself he has served the cause of his people all his life. He was member of the Human Rights Committee and close associate of Dr. Martin Luther King. Known for his negotiating skills and his long association with the United Nations (more than 25 years) he was much sought after for mediating in world problems as peace-maker like in the Middle-East war in 1948. An expert on African affairs he was head of the Division of African Affairs in the State Department. After the assassination of Count Bernadotte, Dr. Ralph Bunche took over at the headquarters on the Aegean Island of Rhodes.

An intellectual of the Harvard school in 1934, earlier in 1928 he was head of the department of political science at Howard University in Washington. He along with Dr. Gunnar Myrdal produced the comprehensive volume *An American Dilemma*, a survey of Negro American. He was appointed by President Eisenhower to the White House Conference on Education and to the Board of the Lincoln Sesquicentennial Commission. He was also a member of the Board of Trustees of the Rockefeller Foundation. A little known fact of Dr. Ralph Bunche was that he had turned down an offer from the American President Truman of being appointed Assistant Secretary of State. Born of poor

parents he and his two sisters were looked after by his grandmother. It was sheer determination and his skill in sports that took him up to Harvard. Dr. Ralph Bunche was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1950. He also received more than 40 awards and 20 academic degrees.

Dr. Ralph Bunche also studied at the London School of Economics and did a course at the South African University. His wife Ruth is a graduate from Howard University and his two daughters graduated from Vassar and Radcliffe while his only son joined the army.

Looking tired after a hectic day, Bunche was still a handsome and athletic figure with a kindly look that carried his 64 years impressively along with a razor sharp intellect. His words had the ring of restlessness and impatience but the quickwitted answers that followed brought in an easy ambience. "Ask me anything you like" was his opening to a long session.

"No man has ever had to deal with so many complex problems as you have had at home and abroad. Having served the Negro cause for so long and sincerely your people still criticize you saying you are not one of them?" was my opening question.

"Being a member of the Human Rights Committee and being a Negro has given me certain advantages but my activity may have been limited as I had to confine myself to certain principles. But all my life I have tried to contribute to the cause. I have marched and marched with Dr. Martin Luther King. Now I cannot march any more, I am weak and old. I also have a eye problem," was his answer.

He was deeply concerned about the Negro problem about which he said, "the situation that erupted in 1983 has improved slightly in the Southern states, but in the North it is very bad. The Ghetoisation of Negroes has

worsened the conflict. Dualism in society has created ugly situations. It has also led to a separatist movement among the Negroes." In a sad voice he added, "violence is bad, but it is bound to erupt, although personally I feel it is not a solution. The young educated Negroes would not agree with me. They feel promises of integration are false."

"As a believer in non-violence and the Gandhian philosophy and an expert negotiator, how would you solve the problem?"

"You cannot give a pat answer to that. Nor would mere resolutions help solve the racial problem. It requires goodwill, understanding and resources for complete integration. The deep discontent, frustration and hatred have to be removed. It is like a war effort and may require the 30 billion dollar a year like the Vietnam war. Forceful integration of schools has not been a success," he said.

Asked in what way the situation differs from what was going on in South Africa?

Dr. Bunche said that only public opinion can bring the South African government to its sense. "They have consistently defied all the U.N. resolutions. Mere economic sanctions cannot help implement the resolutions; other means have to be found, I don't agree to military intervention," he answered.

"You have been known for your successful mediation in the Arab-Israeli dispute of the fifties and in the forties it brought the Arabs and Israelis to sign the armistice agreement. It is said that your charm won over the Arab and Israeli negotiators? Have you an answer?"

A wry smile creased his face, modestly he said – "That was not a smooth sailing job. After the assassination of Count Bernadotte, the UN mediator on Palestine affairs, I was appointed mediator. I was on the job 20 hours a day sipping olive oil-laced coffee on the Aegean Island of

Rhodes, our headquarters. After 81 sleepless nights I got three armistice agreements signed ending the West Asia war."

"And the Suez crisis?"

"I had to organize a UN Emergency Force of 6,000 officers and men. Later as a special envoy of the UN Secretary General I was incharge of the operation to raise the UN force of 20,000 men for the Congo."

"Your early ambition was to be a writer and professor. Do you have any regrets?"

"I had an ambition to teach and write and have not got over it completely even now. That part of my ambition remains unfulfilled" was his reply.

"But you were a skilled athlete that won you a scholarship to the University of California?"

"Yes, I was a basketball and baseball player that brought me many medals but the ones I cherish most are the three miniature gold basketballs. I would not part with them for anything in the world," he said with pride in his voice."

What was your reaction when you heard that you won the Nobel Prize for Peace?

"The 40 awards and 20 academic degrees I won had naturally made me happy but the Nobel Peace Prize came as a pleasant surprise. Of course, I wouldn't believe it at first ..." Recalling the day, he, in a soft voice said - "one afternoon in September 1950 I was having lunch in the delegates' dinning room at Lake Success, my secretary rushed up to me and said 'you have won the Nobel Prize...' I had to buy Champagne for my friends; a luxury I could not afford at the time."

Gunnar Myrdal

Dr Gunnar Myrdal was awarded the Nobel prize by the Royal Swedish Academy in 1974 for his tireless work in removing poverty and improving the life of millions of people in the developing countries. He is one of the very few from the so-called developed west who made immense efforts to remove the weight of suffering from poverty, lack of housing, medical facilities, food and basic needs of life.

Over more than four decades Dr Myrdal's activities span over a wide range from Sweden to the US, Geneva and the UN. He was also a prolific writer. His *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem in American Democracy*, published in 1944, had created a wide controversy for raising the issue of racial injustice; he was called a racist and formentor of trouble. By 1962, he felt the changes in America and said "there should be no doubt that the races are moving rapidly toward equality and desegregation."

In Dr. Myrdal's *Asian Drama* (1968) the basics were moral issues of poverty, population, planning and modernization and it was a deep analysis of the issues facing developing countries.

Major part of Dr Myrdal's life has revolved around academic institutions in Geneva, America and Sweden on economics, education, social sciences and public finance. He was Director at the Carnegie Corporation of America for study of American Negro problems; Economic Adviser

to the Swedish Government and Minister of Commerce; Executive Secretary to UN Economic Commission for Europe (1947-57).

Gunnar Myrdal was given the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding for his outstanding work in promoting international understanding, alleviation of poverty, promotion, growth and his book *The Asian Drama*, an outstanding work of immense interest. "I am honoured at receiving the Nehru award. He was a great Indian and has a wide view of the world scene," said Mr Myrdal as I accosted him soon after he accepted the award.

I had heard of Gunnar Myrdal's achievements and his fight for civil rights from his early book *An American Dilemma*. A highly valued and impressive book, it had stirred the world's conscience. He and his wife Alva were close friends of Galbraith. Myrdal had been invited by the Carnegie Foundation to the United States to study the Negro problem and the outcome was the *American Dilemma*.

"I view situations as an economist from an human angle; racism is bad, it is a cruel joke against human beings I was appalled at what I saw in America" he said.

"Poverty and over population are main causes for under development among the developing countries. India's efforts after independence to introduce a social democracy is a long struggle uphill. This is a fascinating country and my wife has high praise for India and its leadership," said the man of many achievements. His book *The Asian Drama* published in 1968 on backwardness and population problem had a great impact and provoked social debate on problems in developing countries. The husband-wife team had influenced welfare policies in Sweden. He was Minister of Commerce and Ex-secretary of United Nation Economic Commission for Europe in

1947. He was Professor of Economics at Stockholm Hogskola from 1933 to 1950. In 1962, he founded the Institute for International Economics Studies at Stockholm; until 1967 he was also its Director.

Mr. Myrdal's wife Alva is also a distinguished woman in her own right. A social scientist of repute, her work for the welfare of women and children education is widely acknowledged. Mrs Alva Myrdal was posted in India as Ambassador for Sweden in the fifties. She was a woman of rare grace and charm, highly intelligent but modest to the point of being self effacing. 'Rare' because she was humble, affectionate and soft spoken. Alva Myrdal never once flaunted her or her family's achievements.

Most of her time in India was spent on working for the welfare of women and children. Silently and effectively she went about her work visiting villages and studying their problems in the rural areas. Hardly visible in the cocktail or social circles of Delhi, Alva Myrdal spent long hours with women social workers. Her contacts with Durgabai Deshmukh, Indira Gandhi and many other social workers gave her a close up view of the problems prevailing among women and families in the rural areas. Soon after her arrival I met her one evening at her hotel suite for a chat.

"India is very interesting for a social scientist, particularly its diversity, its deeply embedded social traditions, culture and philosophy. I was keen on coming here," said Mrs Myrdal. "I have no intentions of sticking around here and doing the cocktail rounds. I intend to travel to different parts of the country meet the common people and women social workers to learn about conditions and how they cope with the problems. We in Sweden have our own problems like education and social injustice. But being a small country it is much easier in planning to improve conditions.

"Developing countries especially the newly independent countries have a tremendous uphill task but if you have your sights in focus you will succeed. I know there are many educated women who are devoted to the cause of welfare of the community—we in Sweden would like to help in any way possible" she said.

She was an active politician in Sweden and member of the Cabinet. A silent worker of few words—her contribution to the building of a welfare state has been immense.

Leopold Senghor

Leopold Sedar Senghor, President of Senegal – statesman & poet, was born on 9 October 1906. While studying in Paris met CESAIRE with whom he elaborated the concept of Negritude, the specificity of Francophone Negro Literature. He wrote a number of poems. *Chanis D'ombre'* (Songs of Darkness, 1945, rhapsodic in tone celebrating his native land, fusing the self and the external world in a protean torrent of epithets. *Hosties Noires* (Black Hosts) in 1948. His *Selected Poems* contains a preface by Sartre depicting black Francophone as the most powerful revolutionary verse of the period. *Nocturnes* is an incantation in which African and French are mixed. Leopold Senghor's reputation was widely acclaimed as the creator of *Les Fondements of Africanite, Negritude et Arabite*, (1967). His Christian background and French traditions had evolved imperatives of 'Negritude'.

It was late evening, Dr. Leopold Sedar Senghor – the former first President of the Republic of Senegal and Jawaharlal Nehru Award winner for International Understanding – had just returned from a long drive to Agra. Tired and bemused with the sentiment of the Taj, he said, as I entered the room, "I am waiting for you, to sing about the monument of beauty and love that has inspired me about the charm of India."

This was Dr. Leopold Senghor, statesman and poet of Africa, on his second visit to the Taj Mahal. The first was

when he had come here on a State visit as President of Senegal ten years ago, some time in mid sixties, after which he wrote a poem on the Taj. But this time he was captivated not only by the Taj but also by the countryside and the 'little people', whom he met and saw on his long drive. "As head of state you do not see the real people or meet them. So, the present visit has inspired me to write many poems of the beauty of the countryside, the people and especially the women who have many charms and who are representatives of true beauty. Indian women closely resemble the women of Northern Senegal who are also brown complexioned, but Indian women have flat hair while the Senegalese have straight hair," said Dr. Senghor.

An international personality distinguished for his literary achievements Dr. Senghor made history when he introduced the concept of Negritude and universal brotherhood, in his teachings and writings. He was the first African to obtain a Doctorate and 'Aggregation' in France, where he was professor of French, Latin and Greek languages and African civilization for more than fifteen years.

As a statesman he won wide acclaim for his efforts towards African unity, world peace and international cooperation. After twenty long years as Senegal's President he resigned, saying "It is enough. I want to get back to my literary work." A small frail man and 79, he evokes protective feelings at first sight, but has the magic of dwarfing a well built intellectual. His profundity on subjects of human philosophy, languages, history and literature is awe-inspiring. He was one of the few Africans who resurrected the African culture to universal civilization. Dr. Senghor's eloquence on the subject was most revealing.

"The Indian subcontinent and Africa have the same latitudes. The Sumerian and Dravidian languages are

closely related. The Dravidian language and the Senegal language have a lot in common. The first three scripts were shared between Africa and India – especially Dravidian. Civilization came first from the South among people who spoke agglutinated languages. Man emerged from animal around 2.5 million years ago. He remained at the outposts of civilization until the appearance of Homo-Sapiens some 40,000 years ago rather until the invention of the first script by the Egyptians 4,000 years before Christ. Man developed himself on the Indian sub-continent,” said Dr. Senghor excitedly warming up and in faltering Frenchified English. I was bemused by the new knowledge I was acquiring.

“Africa and India were the first continents to create civilization, to be precise, human civilization was born in South India, the Dravidians,” said Dr. Senghor, an authority on classical languages. Dr. Senghor said, “that in the 5th century BC, Egypt had passed on the torch to the Greek Civilization, but India conserved the human civilization and continued to illuminate Asia and the world till today.” Dr. Senghor had introduced the study of Indian civilization and languages at Dakar University. He also founded the Fundamental Institute of Black Africa with a two million dollar gift from Saudi Arabia. At the Institute the study of Dravidian languages and Indian civilization was started with the establishment of the Mudra-Afrique Department.

He propounded the commonality of Dravidian language with the Senegalese – “Madras has the same latitude as Senegal. We in Senegal have the similar flora and fauna, the same brown skinned people as in Tamil Nadu. Our cows camels and elephants look like the Indian ones. The mango fruit came to Senegal from India. My present visit has been more amiable and pleasant. I made

the discovery that the Indian people and Senegalese have much in common."

In 1974, when Dr. Senghor visited India, he had travelled from Bangalore (Madras) to Kashmir in the North. It was then that he realized that the ideal type of woman was here. "The brown complexion and the Sari, the most beautiful garment, makes Indian women the most ideal woman," he said.

Dr. Senghor is Africa's greatest living poet, whose poems have been translated into 20 languages. He has been awarded some of the most prestigious prizes for his literary work and poems. The Grand International Prize for Poetry by the Society of Poets and Artists of France, the Dag Hammarskjöld Gold Medal, the Literary Award of the International Roma Academy are among them.

Dr. Senghor told me that he started writing poetry when he was in school and with unusual candour confessed that he had imitated French poets, the Romanticists. When he was thirty years old he was ashamed of his poems so he set them all to flames, "My poems had all been influenced by France. There was nothing African about them. This I realized when I went to some of the villages in Senegal after my return from French Universities. I met hundreds of my own people and heard them sing, dance and chant. I was deeply impressed and inspired, I began to write African poetry. I soon discovered that African poetry is characterized by three images, symbolic rhythm and melody. This is true of Indian music, dance, sculpture and painting. In India the melody is Asiatic but the rhythm is African," says Dr. Senghor.

"The Aryan, Dravidian and African poetry," said Dr Senghor, "is more passionately sentimental. There is great sensibility. I am not familiar with modern Indian poetry but only with the Vedas, Upanishads, Mahabharata and

Ramayana. In fact Dravidian poetry is influenced by Hinduism," the African poet said.

"Hinduism is a symbiosis – a fusion of three different civilizations with the Aryan and Dravidian dominating. The perfect symbiosis of the Hindu philosophy is the trinity, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Brahma is abstract and Albo-European, but Vishnu and Shiva are profound realities of the Indian sub-continent," said Dr. Senghor.

Vikram Sarabhai

Countries have to provide facilities for its nationals to do front-rank research within the resources which are available. It is equally necessary, having produced the men who can do research, to organize task oriented projects for the nation's practical problem ...

– *Vikram Sarabhai*

Vikram Ambalal Sarabhai was a multi-faceted personality, a distinguished cosmic-ray and space scientist, an institution builder, industrialist, a management expert, educationist, a connoisseur of arts and above all a great human being. He founded the Physical Research Laboratory which later served as the cradle of Space Science Research in India.

Vikram Sarabhai was born on 12 August, 1919 at Ahmedabad. His early education was at a private school run by his parents. After passing Inter (Science) from Gujarat College in Ahmedabad, he joined St. John's College, Cambridge (UK) where he took his Tripos in Natural Sciences in 1939. The outbreak of World War-II necessitated his return to India where he took up cosmic-ray research under the guidance of the Nobel Laureate Sir C.V. Raman at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore. In 1947, he was awarded doctorate by Cambridge University for his thesis, "Cosmic ray Investigations in Tropical Latitudes." On his return to India, Dr. Sarabhai founded the Physical Research Laboratory (PRL) in November 1947 at

Ahmedabad where he continued his scientific activities.

Sarabhai was a builder of institutions. In 1947, Sarabhai founded Ahmedabad Textile Industries' Research Association (ATIR) which he directed until 1956. Between 1950 and 1966, he was instrumental in establishing a chain of industries in Baroda. In 1957, he started Ahmedabad Management Association, (AMA). Realising the need for professional management education in India, he founded Indian Institute of Management (IIM) in 1962 and directed it until 1965.

By 1962, as Chairman of Indian National Committee for Space Research (INCOSPAR) he took over the responsibility of space research in India. He directed the setting up of the Thumba Equatorial Rocket Launching Station (TERLS) at Trivandrum and initiated a programme to fabricate sounding rockets in India. In 1966, he was appointed the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission. He planned to take education to remote villages through satellite communication, implemented under the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) and later in 1965 he established the Community Science Centre in Ahmedabad with a view to popularize science among children. His deep cultural interests led him, along with his wife Mrinalini Sarabhai, to set up Darpana Academy, an institution devoted to performing arts and propagation of ancient culture of India. Sarabhai was awarded the Shanti Swaroop Bhatnagar Award for Physics in 1962 and was honoured with Padma Bhushan in 1966. Padma Vibhushan was awarded to him posthumously in 1972. He was also a member and Chairperson of several national and international committees.

In 1962 I met Vikram Sarabhai in Delhi. A charming well mannered and friendly person, he did not carry the pomposity of an overbearing intellectual. Neither his

immense talent nor achievements were labeled on his coat lapels.

Conversation over the table moved easily on many things. Vikram Sarabhai was a pleasant conversationalist, be it on the Space Research Centre, on our science students, Atomic Energy or on the ancient cultures of India, it was a delightful experience.

"Tell us about the Thumba Equatorial Rocket launching?"

"We have a programme for making fabricating sounding rockets from the Trivandrum station. We will build our own rockets. The Thumba station is a beginning towards developing Rocket technology. As Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission we have plans to take education to remote villages through satellite communication.

"I am keen on study of science by children from an early age. It is to promote interest in science that I thought of setting up Community Science Centres," came his reply.

"What about Space Research?"

"We are progressing on this front and there is keen interest among our young scientists. We have the capability, keenness and the commitment." As the conversation was getting highly scientific and being ignorant on the subject I manoeuvred the conversation to culture and arts.

His knowledge on the subject was amazing, "Culture and artistic percepts are a part of the scientific ambience, what you develop through science research has to take shape in artistic forms or vice-versa the influence is evident in the end result, our Darpana Academy plays a vital and soothing role relaxing the softer side of a research scientist. Look at our ancient sculptures our classical music it is all a part of our ancient and traditional science," said the great scientist in a convincing soft voice. His untimely death is a great loss to India.

Mrinalini Sarabhai

Mrinalini Sarabhai, the celebrated dancer and choreographer, has achieved an international reputation that is unmatched by any contemporary Indian classical dancer. The syntax of her creativity mediates between a moral commitment to traditional form and the desire to claim one's own experiments as unique, unrepeatable. This interface of technical mastery and creative expressionism achieves a profoundly versatile language of the body—simple, eloquent, visually inspiring. The creative anarchy of her essentially modern style is convincingly disciplined by the taut orthodoxy of her classical technique, learnt from her guru Sri Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai. The result is an exalted visual statement combining almost fanatical purity of vision with modish formal experiments.

Mrinalini founded the Darpana Academy of Performing Arts, Ahmedabad in 1949. She has traveled extensively and has received many distinguished national and international awards and citations for her contribution to Indian classical dance. Called 'the High Priestess of Indian dance' by dance critics, she is a pioneer in creative work and has given "new concepts to traditional dance forms with fresh perceptive and new mysteries."

She is the first Indian to receive the medal and Diploma of the French Archives Internationales de la danse. She was awarded the title of Natya Kala Sikhamani in Madras in 1960 in recognition of her artistic eminence and her

unequalled performances of Bharata Natyam. In 1965 she was awarded the Padma Shri by the Government of India. In 1968 she was honoured with a gold medal by the Mexican government for her choreography for the Ballet Folk-lórico of Mexico. In 1969, Gujarat's first State Award for dance was awarded to her for her unique contribution to the art. She is the first and only woman to receive a Veera Shrinkala for her contribution to the Kathakali dance form. In 1979 Mrinalini was awarded the D.Litt. degree for her eminence in dance and literature by the Rabindra Bharati University of Calcutta. She was honoured with the coveted Vishwa Gurjari award in 1984 for achieving a unique international reputation as a contemporary Indian classical dancer and for her contribution to Indian classical dance. She was awarded the prestigious Desikottama (D.Litt. Honoris Causa) degree, the highest honour of the Vishva Bharati University, Santiniketan, in 1987.

She was nominated to the Executive Committee of the International Dance Council, Paris, in 1990. She was presented the Honor Summus Award by the Watumull Foundation, Honolulu, Hawaii in 1991 in recognition of her outstanding success as a dancer, for her creative dance-dramas, and for her revival and preservation of Indian dance, drama and puppetry forms. The first Hall of Fame Award for life-long service to dance was given to her by Dynasty Culture Club in 1991. The same year the Gujarat government honoured her by presenting the Pandit Omkarnath Thakur Award for valuable contribution in the field of performing arts. She was presented the Raseshwar Award by the Sur-Singar Samsad, Bombay in 1992. She was awarded the Padma Bhushan by the President of India in 1992. She was made a Fellow of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi in 1994. She was awarded the Scroll of Honour by the Vice-President of India in 1995 in

recognition of decades-long research, experimentation and presentation of Indian classical and creative dance choreographic creations. She was awarded the Kerala Kalamandalam Fellowship in 1995 and the Kalidas Samman by the Madhya Pradesh government in 1996. She was honoured with the Degree of Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa* (D.Litt.) by the University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK in 1997.

She has choreographed more than three hundred dance dramas. Her creations, 'Krishna-Gopala' and 'This Mahabharata' mirror today's world. Besides, she has also written novels, poetry, plays and stories for children.

I have known Mrinalini since the sixties, seen her dance, and heard her speak on the tradition, cultures of Indian dance and art forms. Active and highly energetic, Mrinalini almost becomes an academic when it comes to culture and dance. Her whole being influences her with a dynamic personality. Dancing and choreography through the years, she lives and dreams dance.

"Does anything else in life enthuse you?" "Not as much as dance, it is not the performance. It is the intrinsic beauty of the stance – the abhinaya – the adavus and the language of the body that conveys the feelings and weaves the story of the song. It casts a spell around you," was her reply. "To answer your question, Yes, I am interested in other things like writing on art and cultures and poetry—*The arts and crafts of India*".

Mrinalini is the daughter of Ammu Swaminathan, a Member of Parliament of the fifties and sixties and well known social worker. Capt. Lakshmi Sehgal of INA fame (Subhash Chandra Bose' Army) is her sister and Mrinalini is the wife of Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, the space scientist. She has a daughter and son. Her daughter, Mallika, is today a famous dancer and runs the Darpana Academy.

John Kenneth Galbraith

John Kenneth Galbraith was United States Ambassador to India from 1961 to 1963. A distinguished and highly eminent economist, writer and diplomat he was a remarkable friend of India who has left indelible impressions that lingers on. Firstly for his love for India and the indefatigable and sincere efforts he made to get his government to see India's point of view and interests on crucial matters at a time when India-US relations were not on an even keel. The Indo-China conflict and the Viet Nam war were some of them. Politically sophisticated Galbraith had a clear and far-sighted view of situations. As John F. Kennedy's man in New Delhi he played a crucial role in Indo-American relations as communicator and peace-maker.

Prof. Galbraith spent his early years teaching at University of California, Harvard and Cambridge, London and later at the Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta (now Kolkata). Apart from, during the war years, working at the State department as administrator of economic affairs, as he says in his book *A Life of Our Times*, "my life has been spent in greater or less, communion with five centres of higher learning" but Harvard was his favourite and England's Cambridge University to a lesser extent where he taught agriculture economics. Some time in the fifties he was drawn to politics getting diverted from economics. He was President of the American Economic Association.

In politics he was a keen campaigner. He was the speech writer for Roosevelt, Adlai Stevenson and John F. Kennedy with whom he was very close. One of the most respected economists of his time, Galbraith had a keen knowledge of the political scene of the sixties. His experience of the New Deal and World War II years and Vietnam enriched his knowledge resulting in many books. A brilliant and provocative writer his books take you on a voyage of the real world of economics, politics, literature, history and nature of man. Galbraith mixes wit with sarcasm a profound knowledge that is provocative and stimulating. In a vain-glorious moment he had said, "in our family, and in my case in particular, the sense of inferiority and counterpart tendency to assertive compensation were made more complex and more offensive—the Galbraiths were regarded, we believed right, as being more intelligent than others".

His personality commanded respect, stern and professorial in manner with a commanding height. Reserved and frank he is not so eloquent as he is in his books, but he commands respect. Self censorship was a shield he wore to effect. With many a degree wrapped up from prestigious universities and his vast area of knowledge built an aura around him.

Galbraith was close to the White House and had close friends in the State department, this helped in minimizing or thwarting the Dulles pro-Pakistan legacy, eg. the arms race for Pakistan, etc. and creating a more understanding atmosphere in India-America relations.

Galbraith and Pandit Nehru were close friends from the time they first met in 1956 when Galbraith was visiting Delhi from Calcutta, at a garden party for Mr. John Foster Dulles at the American Embassy. In his book *A Life of Our Times* Galbraith has remarked about the meeting: "a

handsome man with well carved features—his expression was one of evident distaste for the proceedings.” But it was the beginning of a long and close friendship between them. Galbraith was also a friend of the late Prof. P.C. Mahalanobis, scientist and Head of the Indian Statistical Institute and Member of the Planning Commission and like Nehru belonged to the Fabian society and part of Harold Laski group.

Galbraith and his wife Catherine, an exceptionally pleasant woman, a linguist whose knowledge of languages included Hindi. A student of comparative literature, with an intelligence at par with her husband Catherine was well liked in Delhi’s circles. They arrived in Delhi to take up the Ambassodorial assignment in 1961, a period far from peaceful. One of the first things Galbraith did was to call on Nehru and renew the friendship. Galbraith knew that Nehru was fond of books and he kept sending a constant supply of new books. The two ‘Cambridge men’ had a mutual admiration for each other and saw eye to eye on many important matters. They met often on official as well as on informal occasions. In his memoirs Galbraith says that his objective was to create an understanding that the US has more to offer than the parochial endlessly reiterated anti-communism of the Dulles era, “we sought friendship with other countries for its own sake—we are not opposed to neutralism or nonalignment”.

Galbraith was not just an Ambassador during his three years in India. He had played a crucial and important role in thawing and creating good understanding between the two countries, for example, support on India’s claim to the McMohan Line, the Salazar regime, Portugal issue, stopping CIA activities, in having had a direct link with the White House.

During an interview with him he explained that “our

policy as friends will be to provide India with aircrafts and come to India's help in protecting the cities and bring in military supplies" (India-China war). Not a garrulous speaker at Press meetings he was brief and to the point whatever the situation the answers came short and crisp but pokerface. But a request for an interview was always 'Yes'.

In the early sixties US aid to India amounted to \$ 670 million. Galbraith exercised his influence to increase and divert aid assistance to more important essentials like agriculture—soil management, use of fertilizers and grain hybrids on which he was an expert. A man for all seasons with his perspectives in focus he was no ordinary Ambassador who partied and organized fashion shows—he interacted with the politicians and intellectuals and forged friendships towards a better understanding between both countries. Galbraith has described his win-win objective as "the Chinese and the war made me a paragon of diplomatic achievement overnight" (quote from *A Life of Our Times*).

As Galbraith and wife Catherine who interacted with social workers and often actively involved in their activities, were about to leave India after a successful tenure of three years, Ambassador Galbraith told All India Radio newsreel: "I have learnt and absorbed the varied landscapes, urban areas and cultures of life, its colour and variety. I and my wife have traveled widely in India and have enjoyed our stay we made a large number of friends. My travel in India gave me a better understanding and added to my knowledge of history, geography and culture."

Abdus Salam

Dr. Abdus Salam, who was professor of Theoretical Physics at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, lived between London and Trieste in Italy, where he was Director of the International Centre for Theoretical Physics. The Centre was set up to promote physics research in developing countries. Every year 1,200 physicists from 90 developing countries attend the Centre for studies; Dr. Salam had been associated with the Centre for more than 15 years. Although the Centre is the model for future international efforts towards scientific collaboration, Dr. Salam said he felt strangled as its fate seemed uncertain. He wanted the Centre to be internationalized.

Born in Pakistan, Dr. Salam is a soft spoken and gentle person with an affable temperament – so unlike the familiar impression one has of scientists. Totally absorbed with his “Nufication Theory” – he started on it thirty years ago, “and maybe, it will take me another thirty years to see the end.” Dr. Salam was in Bombay to receive the R.D. Birla Memorial Award for ‘outstanding contribution in physics’. Dr. Salam hopes that the grand unification theory of the ‘electro-nuclear unification’, wherein the electro-magnetic weak and strong nuclear forces would be unified will be completed soon.

Quoting Blackett, Dr. Abdus Salam one of the world’s outstanding theoretical physicists and Nobel Laureate says of the late Dr. Homi Bhabha “he was a great man. He left a

great influence on India. He enhanced life," said Dr. Abdus Salam who had a high regard for Indian scientists. Asked if a mutual exchange of scientists and scientific knowledge between India and Pakistan would not be of mutual benefit, Dr. Abdus Salam answered, "it will be a good idea and would be to mutual advantage, that is, if India will not become patronizing, Pakistan had advanced some years ago in science and technology but I was sorry to find not much progress had been made lately. Before coming here I went to Pakistan and I found considerable enthusiasm among industrialists to increase the scientific man-power. They are setting up an institute similar to the Tata Fundamental Research you have here."

Dr. Abdus Salam said "I personally believe that developing countries need science and technology if only to discriminate. Even the poorest country needs science – at least advanced technology. As for first class science only a few may need it. The growth of science in the developing countries has been dismal, the ideal technology can be bought without science or scientific research is what has retarded progress. The better segments of the community should be willing to look after their own deserving and deprived colleagues in order to pursue physics research, even theoretical research in a developing country is a heartbreaking task. When I returned to Pakistan in 1951 after working at Cambridge and Princeton in particle physics I could in a country of 90 million call on just one physicist. Today the situation has vastly improved.

"For a developing country isn't it too much of a luxury physics or science research and where is all this going to lead to?"

"I agree with you, but the point is that modern development is also necessary. Somehow, we get into a vicious circle. However, you cannot keep out the

development of science and technology or the madness for development of nuclear science," replied Dr. Salam and quotes his professor when he was a student, "It is easy to stop a first rate scientist working on nuclear physics but impossible to stop a third rate scientist. Once the principle is evolved, it is the third rate man who go ahead."

"Will stopping research slow down technico-economic growth?"

"I suppose we do possess the information necessary to solve problems of hunger and disease. We simply do not take the right decision to put the requisite policies into effect. There is one field, however, where I should certainly wish to stop all research – armament."

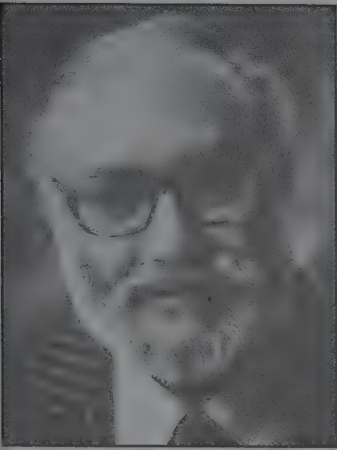
"Though Physics has changed in the last three decades considerably new inputs would always emerge from the enquiring mind," says Dr. Salam. He was very impressed with the physicists working at the Kolar Gold mines. "They are a remarkable team doing excellent work," was his comment.

A teetotaler and non-smoker Dr. Abdus Salam is a very sensitive person with a remarkably alert mind. Every question was answered with finesse, giving nothing sometimes and at times giving a lot with disarming candour. To the question on how advanced is Pakistan on nuclear science, his tactful reply was "I do not live there how do I know."

Dr. Abdus Salam, who became the Director of the Trieste Centre, after his work in high energy physics at Cambridge and Princeton returned to Lahore for a teaching spell, later went to London. As it happens to all geniuses recognition comes from a foreign country and to Dr. Abdus Salam it was no different. The numerous awards he has won are from Europe but Pakistan did not forget to confer on him the *Sitara-i-Pakistan*.

Dr. Abdus Salam has called the Birla Memorial Award "significant" as it was accompanied by affection and a great deal of sentiment from the Indian community of scientists and students. "This is something marvellous. It is this affection that has brought me here. My visit has been extremely pleasant. I was happy to see the enthusiasm among young people for science. It was a wonderful experience. At the Jamia Milia I had to lecture twice to two different sections as there were so many young students who had come to hear me. It was good to see them responding to science," said Dr. Salam.

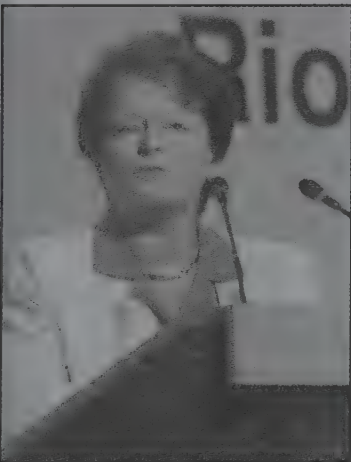
Dr. Salam was in Delhi last in 1977 and what he sees here now are that people look "reasonably happy" and is impressed by the superior technological development that has taken place. Dr. Salam could not help having a dig all in good humour at his hosts, the IPA (Indian Physics Association). When he was asked why he did not attend the function at the Benaras Hindu University where he was awarded a doctorate for outstanding work, "My hosts are jealous people. They wanted me all for themselves."



Abdus Salam



Alan Garcia



Gro Harlem Brundtland

Hans Dietrich Genscher



Henry Edward Bolte

John Kenneth Galbraith
with the author





Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al
Nahyan

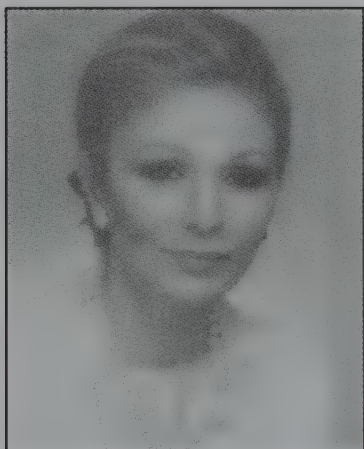
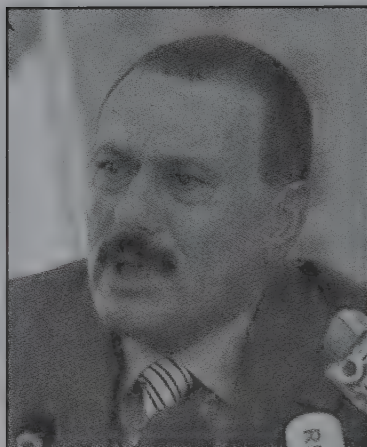


Jenny Lee

Fenner Brockway and
Aneurin Bevan Nye



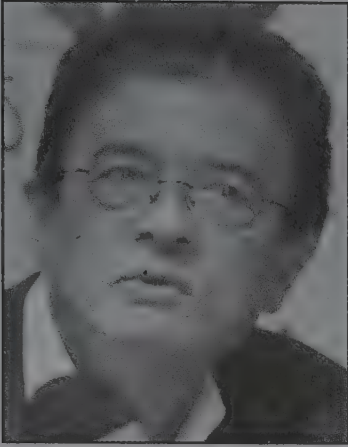
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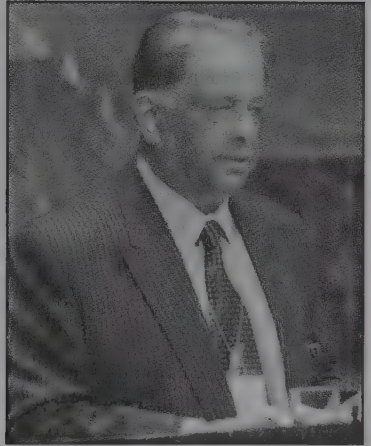
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Begum Liaquat Ali Khan

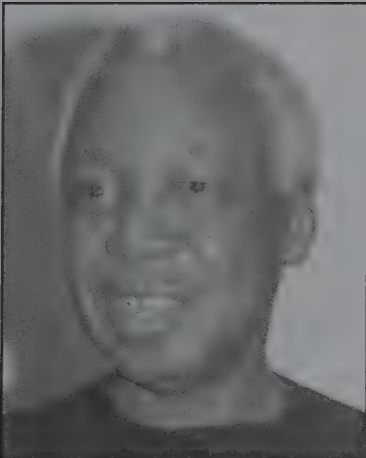




Razali Ismail



Anerood Jugnauth



Julius Nyrere

Aruna Asaf Ali

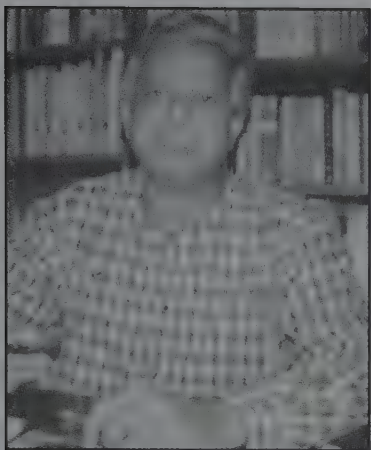


Han Suyin



Maumoon Abdul Gayoom
with Prime Minister
Manmohan Singh





Muhammad Yunus

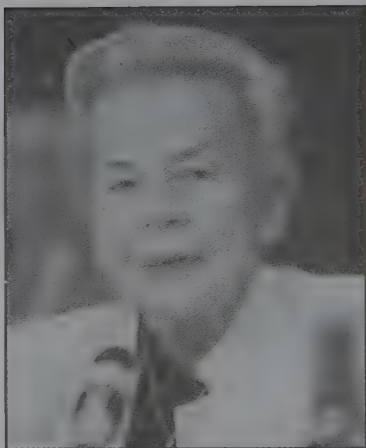
Zia-ur-Rahman



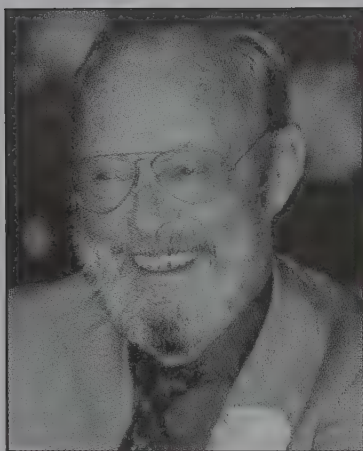
Sultan Bin Salmaan
Al-Saud with the author



Helvi Sipila



Prince Bernard



Sirimavo Bandaranaike,
Lal Bahadur Shastri
and Zakir Hussain



Alan Garcia

Staying back after the Africa summit in 1986 as a special guest of India was the youthful, handsome President of Peru, Dr. Alan Garcia, who was also the chief guest at the Republic Day parade. A remarkable leader, he represents a new generation in Latin America. After many years of military rule Peru has now a democratic government led by young Alan Garcia Perez. A courageous crusader he has taken on many issues harassing the Latin Americans like drug traffic and debt problems. Alan Garcia became President on July 28, 1985, when he made a commitment to Peruvians to build a nationalist democratic popular government that will find solutions to their problems. In a country where inflation is on the increase (200 per cent), unemployment jumps by leaps and bounds (only 35 per cent of the Peruvians are employed), "as a result of distortions that have taken place over many decades we are now facing a situation in which our meager wealth is in the hands of a few while the larger majority is languishing in misery, it will be a mandate of my government to effect a better distribution of our meager resources, and to make it truly productive," Alan Garcia had said during his inaugural address.

But pragmatically he added, "to offer immediate promises is demagoguery. The country needs a government that will not use power for abuse and arrogance nor for self interest or self-enrichment a government that asks for

nothing from the state but everything must be given for it, the public servant serves the state he does not take from the state”.

The Peruvian President was a very popular man in New Delhi. Informal, friendly and charming, after a cluster of VVIPs were introduced to him at lunch, the Foreign Minister of Peru, a very intelligent and charming young man introduced me to Alan Garcia. “I am only a journalist not a VIP,” I said as we shook hands. “Why that word ‘only’? I think a journalist is more of a VIP in my opinion,” was his reply that ended in a lively conversation.

Alan Garcia was honoured with a degree of Doctor of Laws by the University of Delhi. His 40 minute speech delivered extempore impressed everyone present there at Vigyan Bhavan in the early morning. He said the Latin American nations were struggling to find the vital élan which is a people’s soul, to replace the one extinguished five centuries back by civilizations of European conquerors. India, he said, has found this essential equation for the soul. Later in the day he addressed a crowded press conference where he called for a world organization which would enable developing countries to get funds without having to accept IMF conditionalities and the consequent impoverishment.

Mr. Alan Garcia said that “Peru had many things to learn from India whose experience is very relevant.” He was impressed with the transport and distribution of milk in India and the Panchayati Raj. After a visit to the Taj at Agra he told this correspondent that he was simply delighted to see the Taj and curious about its architecture.

Mr. Alan Garcia has been reelected as the President of Peru in 2006.

Fenner Brockway

Lord Fenner Brockway of the British Labour Party and close friend of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru was also a close friend of India who had earned the ire of the British Parliament for supporting India's freedom movement. For raising the issue in the British Parliament he was suspended. Gandhiji had once given Lord Fenner Brockway a Gandhi cap – the status symbol of the freedom movement. Lord Fenner wore the cap one day to Parliament and dare Parliament to arrest him for wearing the cap.

Lord Fenner Brockway was a rebel and his outspokenness often caused embarrassment to the British Government. As Co-Chairman of the World Disarmament campaign in the UK, he often said that dropping of the bomb over Hiroshima had triggered off the arms race between the superpowers. He was Secretary in 1919 of the British Committee of the Indian National Congress and had close links with the Congress leaders in India. He was a figure that could never be missed as he dressed in a western suit but wore the Gandhi cap. The veteran politician and Parliamentarian was the oldest member of Parliament and friend of Krishna Menon. An ardent Labourite he was closely associated with Bertrand Russell, H.G. Wells, Aneurin Bevan, Harold Laski and others.

Born in Calcutta on 1 November 1888, he started his career as a journalist – (was sacked for incompetence), later was Editor of the *New Leader*. He was the last British Socialist

to campaign against Hitler in 1932. In 1911, he was Editor of the *Labour Leader*. After the War, he was Secretary of the British Committee of the Indian National Congress in 1920, but Gandhi did not want foreign propaganda.

He was Executive of Socialist International Chairman of League against Imperialism in 1929. A Socialist prophet and a Socialist messiah, he was strongly against colonialism, he fought to bring Independence to Africans and was upset at the anti-India feelings in East Africa. Nehru's appeal to Indians to identify themselves with the struggle of Africans gave him good reason to speak to the Indians and African leaders which began to have a soothing effect that brought about rapprochement.

It was in August 1984 Lord Fenner Brockway had come to Delhi on one of his many visits this time mainly to discuss with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on convening a world disarmament conference in Delhi, Vienna or Stockholm. It was a strange incident or one of those bureaucratic bloomers that led me to Lord Fenner Brockway. I had walked into the Director General's office (Doordarshan) one morning. He was on the phone trying to get a 'Lord Brockefeller' for an interview. Failing to find the non-existent Lord Brockefeller, he was at sixes and sevens. After many attempts one of the called party suggested 'try Lord Fenner Brockway'.

Not to let go of a good tipoff 'I slipped out of the room rushing down to the newsroom, phoned Ashoka Hotel and asked to be connected to the existing Lord Fenner Brockway – a sharp no-nonsense voice came clear over the phone. Later, in the day when I met him I was amazed to see a strong elderly man who briskly shook hands which made me doubt if I was calling on the right person. At 96 years of age Lord Fenner's mind was as sharp as an young intellect, his quick repartee alerts you to attentiveness. A

stormy rebel of the British Labour Party of the forties and fifties he was a Gandhi-ite and played no small part for India's independence from Britain.

The 96 years had passed lightly over him, in his thinking or voice except for slight hardness of hearing. Surprisingly, age that brings irritability crustiness or impatience had obviously not affected the oldest British member of Parliament. His Congress Party hosts had kept his programme light.

Top priority on his list was disarmament discussed with Mrs. Gandhi. He walked into the AICC office wearing a Gandhi cap to meet Rajiv and other Congress leaders.

"I am here mainly to discuss the disarmament issue India is concerned about. We are planning to hold a world conference in 1986. I believe that the disarmament question would be solved if all countries come together."

'Good luck,' I said not in words but within me, even in those days it was wishful thinking.

On India's progress after independence – the seasoned politician said, "well, it is doing well for itself after Nehru his daughter is a good Prime Minister – I see a good deal of progress around me and the leaders of the Congress Party should know what their priorities are – there is no bitterness left of the long struggle for independence and India and Britain are maintaining good relations. I was born in India and proud to think of Gandhi and Nehru as friends and be associated with the national Congress" was his way of ending the interview.

When Gandhi & Nehru were in prison Brockway was chairman of the Indian Freedom Committee in London. A legendary figure whose charisma still hovers over the Labour and Socialist scene.

Aneurin Bevan Nye

Mr. Aneurin Bevan 'Nye' was British Labour M.P. from the Welsh Country of Monmouthshire Tredegar, a Welsh mining town. He was born on 15 November 1897. Son of a miner, his early experience of life came from the mines where he had worked at an early age. Seven years in the pits and his brush with authority made him a revolutionary and brought him useful knowledge and an intense dislike for the whole system of private ownership.

By the time he was 19 years old he became the youngest Chairman of the 'Lodge' or Miners Union. Socialism was his driving force – his mentor. The first World War completed his graduation to Socialism. As the miners' leader, Nye Bevan matured into a politician of a high caliber. It has been said that his best qualifications were his honesty, frankness and dedication to a cause. A rebel not only against exploitation of labour, by the coal mine owners, but also against the cramping atmosphere of the Welsh non-conformist society. When the Tredegar Labour Party was formed in 1919 he became its spokesman.

The early twenties were the years when Marxist or Socialist groups were growing in England due to unemployment, poverty, low wages and lack of housing. Bevan's popularity took him to the centre stage of politics to fight the establishment for a better life for the working class. He won his first election in 1925 to the Tredegar Council. In 1929, was elected to the first British Parliament

on the Labour vote on universal suffrage. From then on there was no stopping Bevan and in 1945 after being re-elected he was appointed Minister for Housing and Health, the youngest member of the Labour Cabinet at the age of 47 in the Attlee government.

Aneurin 'Nye' Bevan was the most controversial courageous politician and a brilliant debater, highly respected, exponent of democratic socialism who openly disagreed with older leaders like Winston Churchill, Sir Stafford Cripps and Lord Attlee. A good friend of India his clashes largely on India and the Middle East brought him not only high praise but also criticism from the opposition and often from his own party. His words had a force to strike and his plea for India's independence was no small effort in a hostile Britain. His clashes with Churchill is history. Bevan in his characteristic manner once referred to Churchill – 'He is a man suffering from petrified adolescence.'

The close friendship between Nehru and Bevan was so strong that his fierce opposition of the British policy to India's independence almost cost him his position in the Socialist Party and Parliament. On one of his visits to India at a time when relations between India and Britain were less than cordial and the question of membership of the Commonwealth was in suspense, Nye Bevan was invited to address both houses of Parliament in Delhi. His address helped in soothing frayed nerves on the Kashmir issue and India's role in world affairs, and "not to despair of opposition policies in Britain and not to leave the Commonwealth." The Indian press went to town with Bevan's speech, applauding his efforts for goodwill building between India and Britain.

At a press conference later Bevan was more outspoken as he felt – "my visit here was the most pleasant of all." As

Editor of the *Tribune*, London, he lambasted the Tory policies against India and the arrests of leaders like Nehru and Gandhi. We have proclaimed a 'Whipping Act' for the people of India," he said attacking Churchill and Attlee, calling them 'wholesalers in disaster.' During his visits to India, Bevan and his wife stayed with Nehru at Teen Murti – his last visit was in 1957. Earlier in 1952-53 after his resignation from the Cabinet as foreign secretary of the Labour party shadow cabinet Bevan was on a holiday in India. He was invited by the President and stayed in Rashtrapati Bhawan. He visited Kashmir, Punjab and other places. India was during those days in the thick of the non-aligned movement.

I asked Mr. Bevan to comment on NAM – his reply was "Nehru's India of a non-aligned bloc is good. Civilization is little more than the opportunity freely to choose between a number of proffered alternatives, it is not political democracy that is on trial in South East Asia, independent nations have a right to chart out their own destiny, it is democracy as an instrument of revolutionary changes."

On India's role in World affairs after independence, Mr. Bevan said – "India within the framework of a socialist democracy has an important role among the newly independent nations and the African countries. India's role at the United Nations on Korea is to be appreciated."

"On tensions between India and Britain and India's threat to leave the Commonwealth," he said, "India has the right to disagree with British policy on Kashmir, and need not complain if the British return the compliment – the Commonwealth is held together for the good of nations, east and west, it would be a folly for India to leave the Commonwealth at a moment when institutions were forming into a body which is a necessity for new nations."

Asked about his tour of Kashmir and other cities, Mr. Bevan was eloquent – “the Taj Mahal is the most beautiful sight in the silver light of the full moon. It is a note of lovely music and held in exquisite masonry, but Ranikhet 7,500 ft. high was all I wished for. It was a breathtaking experience. It has a magic effect on me I was no more tired and I felt at peace and refreshed. I went to my most refreshing sleep in India.” Kashmir held him enthralled and he was sad it was embroiled in dispute.

Nye Bevan has been anti-American all along, he suspected their motives. He raged against Britain when it criticized India’s policy in Kashmir at the UN. Bevan continuously clashed with Churchill, Attlee, Sir Stafford, Cripps & others on India during the Congress movement for independence.

After his holiday in India Nye Bevan decided to go home via Pakistan. In a letter to his wife Jenny Lee, dated 6 March 1953, “I am going to Pakistan for three days I am not looking forward to it in the least”*

The National Health Policy of Britain, which today Britain boasts of, was entirely Nye Bevan’s untiring effort. In the early sixties Bevan was very sick and in hospital. Nehru and Indira who were in London for the Commonwealth Conference visited him in hospital. Nye Bevan died in July 1960 at the age of 63.

* Quoted from Michael Foot, *Nye Bevan 1945-60*.

Jenny Lee

Baroness Jenny Lee and her husband Aneurin Bevan, a Minister of the Labour Cabinet in the fifties in U.K. were known for their brilliant parliamentary debates. They were exponents of democratic socialism. Jenny Lee was three times elected to the British Parliament as member of the Independent Labour Party from North Lanark South-West first in 1929. She represented a community of miners and technicians forming a socialist society at Cannock which had a population of a little more than sixty thousand. The Scottish born former school teacher resigned when the General Strike closed the mines in 1926. It was the struggle in the coalfields that shaped the whole of her life more than any other experience, she once said.

She was an active and combative parliamentarian known for her quick wit and charming personality. Her first maiden speech in the House of Commons was an attack on Winston Churchill's budget proposals. He was Chancellor of the Exchequer. She was congratulated by him later for her speech. She met Aneurin Bevan for the first time in Parliament, whose rapier thrust deadly attacks on Lloyd George and others made history. Jenny Lee also dabbled in journalism, she was on the Editorial Board of the *Tribune*, London. As an Independent Labour Party member she contested by-elections to Parliament twice, and was actively involved in anti-Hitler work. After the War she again contested for parliament and joined her husband

in politics. After her husband's death in 1960, Jenny Lee was made Minister for the Arts during 1964-70 and in 1966 was Privy Councillor and in 1970 made a life peer. She has written a number of books including *Tomorrow is a New Day*, *Russia, Our Ally* and *My Life with Nye*. The Bevan couple loved visiting India, they were close friends of Pandit Nehru and were his guests. Soon after her tour of some states in 1956, she was back in Delhi when a common friend S.K. Dey Administrator of community projects introduced me to Jenny Lee –

Any particular reason for this visit?

"We are close friends of India and I have always followed closely the doings here and always wanted you to get your freedom and now that India is free, I want to see and meet the people and learn how they have shouldered their responsibilities", was her reply.

"What are your impressions?"

"I am amazed, and happily too, at the social and economic progress that you have made – everything seems to be happening here at once. It is the new shape of India that I am anxious to see, the villages and the cleaning up of evil customs with healthy living. Better prospects and a happier home life free from want is my idea of a great nation and I see plans afoot here towards this goal", said the Labour M.P. from the United Kingdom.

"My heart was sore when I visited a hospital to see a child dying of malnutrition. 'When will this end?' asked Jenny Lee. 'I and my husband are happy to see in our lifetime that where was once only misery and poverty now people are living a better life with enough to eat and to clothe themselves'".

Her visits to Community project centers in the country brightened her outlook, 'it was a wonderful sight I saw, the dawn of a new era, and by the end of the Second Five

Year Plan, every rural area will have something hopeful to look forward to." A former Minister in the British Labour cabinet, there was a time in her life, exactly in 1931, when she was out of Parliament, she had turned towards a law career. Before she reached half way Politics drew her back. In spite of some great achievements she was a down to earth person and preferred to remain what she called herself 'a country girl'.

Remarking, with a happy surprise "It is amazing to see so many Indian women holding jobs, looking very feminine in their sarees. So many are in politics carrying their responsibilities very efficiently".

She was a great admirer of Nehru and was impressed by his deep devotion to India and to build a better nation for his people. During a later visit to India, she said, " I became a victim of my friend Pandit Nehru's passion for industrialization. He insisted I visit several huge steel works, I was incapable of understanding the various industrial processes I was shown". "This changing India was endlessly fascinating". Recalling an incident - "I was a guest of the Governor of Calcutta, so was Lady Mountbatten. At dinner I was asked if I preferred Indian or English food. I was about to say Indian as I liked Indian food and would be less trouble for the cook, before I could say so, Lady Mountbatten told the attendant, "We shall both have English food. Now, can we even begin to bridge the gap between the western world and what we call the developing nations," wondered Jenny Lee.*

* From Jenny Lee's Book - *My Life With Nye*.

Gro Harlem Brundtland

Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway said, to a question, that her biggest challenge during her seven years as Prime Minister was the environment and development, 'this is my biggest challenge, there is an urgent need to fashion a long-term integrated global strategy for survival on this planet, we need a strategy for common survival and common security for a common future.'

In an interview the sharply intelligent and vocal lady and Prime Minister from the land of Fjords mainly spoke of the work done by the Commission on Environment and Development of which she is the chairman. The Commission came into being during the 10th anniversary of the Stockholm Conference in 1982. The Brundtland Commission has done intensive study on environment and development and its report was presented to the United Nations last month. 'Our Common Future' as the report is called was presented by Mrs. Brundtland to representatives of the South Asian region in New Delhi on July 6.

The interaction of economy and ecology is needed and public participation enlisted, people have a right to know the harmful effects on their environment. I do not find any difference between human beings the differences are between government. But each country has a different development pattern. What is required is a new approach in which all nations aim at a type of development that

integrates production with resource conservation and enhancement that links both provision for all for an adequate livelihood base and equitable access to resources.'

"The Report," said Mrs. Brundtland, "is not a book on environment or development written by economists or environmentalists but an in-depth analysis of the issues and debates and a political document. We studied nationalism and the artificial divides between industrialized and developing nations. East or West receded and in its place a common concern for the planet and for interlocking ecological and economic threats with which its people, institutions and governments can realize the problems of global environment.'

She said, "it is both futile and an insult to the poor to tell them that they must remain in poverty to protect the environment. Development has to be based on environmental resources. A new international ethic is needed which looks beyond narrow and shortsighted national ambitions."

On the nuclear threat to the environment Mrs. Brundtland replied that there can be no positive answers available, the bigger the need for nuclear energy the bigger the burden on the environmental system. "There has to be a strategy to find solutions for energy problems. I do not visualize any threat of a nuclear winter or thermonuclear war.

"This need for nuclear energy for peaceful purposes increases, the generation of nuclear power. It can be justified if there are solid solutions to the unsolved problems, low energy paths used on renewable sources should form the foundation of the global energy structure in the 21st century," said Mrs. Brundtland.

Asked what Norway has done in this field Mrs. Brundtland said, "A North-South dialogue was promoted,

mechanics evolved for a change process in industrial sectors and an environmental protection which are strictly implemented."

Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland is well versed on the environmental question having worked and written on the subject, she is better known among world circles for her interest in this area, she was Norway's minister for environment in the Labour government from 1974 to 79. At 48, she is the only medical doctor Prime Minister with a degree from Harvard in public Health who held a number of jobs in the medical field.

Charming but practical. Elected in 1977 to parliament she was for long the Labour Party's leader in parliament and has been its driving force since she first joined the party. Gro Brundtland, mother of four and a husband who is an active member of the opposition (Conservative) epitomizes the present independent career woman in the Scandinavian countries. She was the daughter of a Social Democrat. Her father, Gudmund Harlem, was a doctor and minister of social affairs and defence. The daughter moved a step higher in the political hierarchy when she became prime minister in 1981 making history as Scandinavia's first and Europe's second prime minister.

This woman from the land of the Vikings is a purposeful woman who has so far done a good job and kept male chauvinists at bay. Reappointed last year to a second term, Gro Brundtland is not a feminist and yet she appointed seven women to her cabinet of 17. They are in their 30's and 40's.

"I was making a point and striking a blow for the cause of political equality between the sexes. We in Norway are way ahead of the rest of the world at least in this respect," she said.

She reminds me of the Kripalani team which sat on

different sides in parliament, her husband was with the opposition. When asked about this, she replied "does anyone ever ask a man in politics how he can live with a spouse who doesn't espouse his views?" she shot back.

Norway's prime minister is a popular lady at home who is often seen skiing and sailing with her family and friends. Politics became a part of her early life in school when she took active interest in the national Labour Party youth affairs and in college she was deputy chairman of the Labour Party Students Union, rather an unusual thing for a Norwegian woman whose priority is marriage and home.

But the Harlem family had politics running in their veins, not only her father but her mother was an active political worker and secretary of the Labour Party.

Impressed with her first visit to India, Gro Brundtland said she found time to discuss bilateral relations and cooperation in the southern ocean areas, "our relations and understanding have been very good and India and Norway are among the earliest to have entered into cooperation in many areas of development," said Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland.

Hans Dietrich Genscher

Mr Hans Dietrich Genscher is a frequent visitor to India and has a good understanding and relations with the Indira Gandhi government. A popular diplomat known for his person-to-person diplomacy supported by an amiable approach to problems – always on terms to agree or disagreeing. Suave outspoken unlike the taciturn German of old – he was a practicing diplomat to the stretched line of humaneness.

Mr. Genscher is known for adeptness at ironing out wrinkles in a working relationship with countries or with heads of governments. The former FDP leader feels more at home in the corridors of plush diplomacy than with party affairs. He views the matter at hand more importantly than any hurt feelings, or what may be called in common parlance—he is a thorough professional.

Mr Genscher is also the Deputy Chancellor who one day (who knows) may become Chancellor. All may not be smooth sailing for Mr Genscher at Bonn but there have been occasions when Genscher has walked away from the conference table with a consensus on his policy decisions and not unlike politicians anywhere in the world. Mr Genscher has had his act of taking sides. If he is popular with the FDP and SPD, the right wingers CDU and ASU may not have much to praise him.

Born in the Eastern part of Germany he studied law and economics at the Leipzing and Halle universities. He

had his war-time spell with the Air Force and after getting his degrees practiced law at Bremen. Mr. Genscher's colleagues at the Foreign Office say that his sense of humour makes the long hours he puts in at his desk enduring not only for him but for his colleagues too.

At the lunch given by him one got an inkling to Mr. Genscher's concealed sense of humour when he asked his guest MPs, ministers and journalists to put any question – there was not a sound from any of them around the table. A colleague sitting beside me quipped – “Our MP's are used to putting questions before lunch and as for us journalists we are waiting for the press conference to be held an hour later.”

Mr. Genscher's visit may open more economic cooperation, but it was his replies to the Punjab extremist activity in Germany that would pay better dividends. As a foreign policy pundit, he has left some deep impressions in some of the Capitals of the world. Some of his remarks, opinions and comments give an idea of the man who steers the foreign policy of West Germany. On Arms Control he said, “problems concerning nuclear arms including the problems of INF, can only be solved through serious arms control negotiations reared to the goal of reaching agreement.”

On North-South Dialogue – “These problems can be solved only through cooperation based on partnership between countries and industrial nations in the East and the West, as they bear equal responsibility.”

On Biotechnology and the Third World – “The technologies of the future, especially microelectronics and biotechnology, possess great potential for solving the world's food problems and the environmental problems.”

On Detente – “It is in the interest of both our western partners and our eastern neighbours that our country,

situated as it is in the heart of Europe, should stay unerringly on this course."

On human Rights – "We are committed without reservation to the cause of human rights and self-determination of nations as the foundation needed for peoples to be alive to live together in peace."

Perhaps this was Mr Genscher's fifth visit to India since he took over as Foreign Minister eleven years ago. He was last here to attend the funeral of Mrs Indira Gandhi.

For nearly 14 years he remained Foreign Minister – the longest period anywhere in the world.

Henry Edward Bolte

A gentleman farmer to a politician from 1947, giving up his plus fours and a beret, tramping around his large acres of fields, Sir Henry Edward Bolte was one of Australia's effective and well known politicians in the sixties. Since 1955 he has been a leader of the liberal party of Australia going on to become premier ending with the longest tenure in Victoria. During the eleven years of his premiership he was responsible for the fast development of Victoria and other areas. There are many firsts and credits to his name during his tenure, like industrial development agricultural programmes and discovery of gas in Australia's off shore areas.

The famous Victorian Arts Centre was his idea. It also houses a theatre complex and cost over 24 million dollars. His activities have been many, apart from being a farmer with 3,000 merino sheep on his 1,100 acre farm in West Victoria. To dwell over some statistics on Victoria, the state by the seventies held sway over 18,065 factories employing over 450,658 persons with the farmers supplying one quarter of the nation's primary products. In an interview during his visit to New Delhi in 1969 he told this writer, "we have recently discovered gas I foresee in the next five years greater industrial expansion than we have ever had. In the last few years there has been significant developments in industry and with the discovery of oil and gas overseas industrialists are showing interest," he said.

Sir Henry Bolte's popularity rose uphill after he introduced reforms and industrial development. After the gold rush of 1850 lasting three years, Victoria's development was rather slow in the field of agriculture but soon picked up once the industry gained momentum. Explaining he said, "our population is also growing fast and this means that the essential services must expand. By next year (1970) our universities and other tertiary facilities will have to grow to meet the demands of higher education."

An avid race-goer who owns a team of horses politely remarked, "you have some good race courses in India." Switching on to tourism, Sir Henry who wants to promote tourism between India and Australia said, "we will try to offer the best to our tourists. If each visitor spends ten dollars, you can imagine the inflow of money for business and the hotel industry." The gentleman farmer turned a successful politician and Premier gave the impression that he liked what he saw here and would like to build many bridges of friendship and economic cooperation.

Earlier, Mrs Indira Gandhi's visit to Australia had whetted the appetite of Australians to know more about India. Since then more and more Australians have been visiting India. The High Commissioners of the sixties, seventies and eighties have since then made untiring efforts to promote friendship and good will between the two countries. "Many of our nation building problems are similar and after Mrs Indira Gandhi's visit which was a tremendous success the Australians' interest has grown. This is why more and more Australians are visiting India of late," said Premier Sir Henry Bolte. "I would like more Indians to visit Australia especially from the academic and cultural fields, today we know more about India than you do about us, an interaction of music and arts with the

Victorian Arts Centre will open a two-way flow between our countries," said Sir Henry appreciating the paintings at Rashtrapathi Bhavan.

Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan

Trade relations between the Republic of India and the Arab Gulf countries (including UAE) have always been strong and prosperous dating back to ancient times, declared President Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan in an interview when I met him at his palace in Al-Ain, UAE.

He added that these relations have today become stronger than ever before due to modern means of transport.

The interview with President Sheikh Zayed centred around developments in UAE with special reference to building activities, UAE's foreign policy and bi-lateral relations between the United Arab Emirates and the Republic of India.

Before answering questions, the President asked me to give my own impressions about the United Arab Emirates following the conclusion of my tour of the country.

I was greatly impressed with the rapid advancement that has taken place in this newly emerging country. "Although I had heard a good deal about the achievements of UAE, nevertheless what I have myself personally seen is really fantastic and, in any case, beyond my expectation," I told the President.

I told the President that during my tour I had seen works going on in the matter of building schools, roads and houses and asked the President why there were no factories or large-scale industries in the country.

The President replied: "The people of this region have,

in the past, been living in abject poverty and a decent way of life was not available to them. Therefore, we had to make for all the citizens modern amenities such as hospitals, schools, houses and other essential services so that they may enjoy the benefits of the modern world. As soon as these essential services are completed, we shall proceed with the building of factories and other large industries in the country. That's why you did not find many factories at present."

To a question about his personal ambition in relation to his people, President Sheikh Zayed said: "My aim has been, and is, to ensure that our people enjoy decent standards of living and, at the same time, have all the modern amenities as are available to citizens of other advanced countries."

Replying to another question, the President said the United Arab Emirates firmly believe in mutual cooperation and friendship with all nations of the world. "In pursuance of these goals, we seek to establish bonds of friendship with all the nations of the world. We are against sowing seeds of dissension between the nations."

I pointed out - "A number of high-level delegations from the United Arab Emirates visited India during the past few months and both sides agreed to set up joint committees to study plans for execution of joint ventures which have had approval of both countries but so far no meetings have taken place. Are there any obstacles in the way of these committees since no meetings have taken place?"

"There are absolutely no obstacles in the way of holding meetings. All the ministries concerned as well the officials involved have been working out details to strengthen relations with India in the different sectors."

Answering another question on his visiting India,

President Sheikh Zayed said he expects to visit India next autumn.

The President ended his interview by reiterating that both the UAE and India are connected by ancient ties of friendship and that the UAE would do its utmost to further strengthen these bonds.

Ali Abdullah Saleh

The President of the Yemen Arab Republic (Sana), Colonel (the highest rank in the Yemeni Armed Forces) Ali Abdullah Saleh, a short intense human dynamo, has been President of the Little Indian Ocean republic for many years. He was leading a 30-men delegation to the non-aligned summit in Delhi. I met him a few hours before he left Delhi on his way home.

He was immensely pleased with the job India has done and was all praise for Indian officials and Mrs. Indira Gandhi, who was the present Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement. "I am very happy she has taken over as she is best suited to keep the one hundred and one members united and follow the principles of the movement that was launched by her great father Jawaharlal Nehru."

"The few days that I have been here have been richly rewarding; for me it was good opportunity to meet so many heads of state and other members of the non-aligned, and to hold bilateral meetings, otherwise to visit hundred countries on an average of three days in each country would take a year. Conferences like this offer better opportunities for smaller countries to make their presence felt," said Col. Ali Abdullah Saleh, who is also Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and Secretary - General to the People's General Congress.

Non-alignment, said Col. Ali Abdullah Saleh, does not mean passivity or passivism or forsaking positive

obligations towards causes of goodwill. The Non-aligned policy has new dimensions to international relations; the most important of which is the support given to liberate colonized and oppressed nations.: "We in the Arab Republic of Yemen are deeply concerned for the unity of the movement. The goals and principles with all their liberating and humanitarian significance also form the basis of my country's policy since the emergence of our 26 September Revolution."

"Our biggest problems are the Palestinian issue, the Iraq-Iran war, nuclear and other economic problems but of particular worry is the unity, growth and effectiveness of the movement. What is going on in South Africa is also of concern. All these problems can be solved only if the movement is united. If the member states yield to the pressures which are trying to divert the course of the movement towards international affiliations, it will harm the Movement. Therefore, it is dangerous to leave out difference to widen and turn into military conflicts – all bilateral issues should be solved in accordance with our principles and the United Nations charter," said the President of the Yemen Arab Republic.

On the Palestinian question he said, the movement should adopt the Arab peace initiative declared by the Arab summit at Fez. On disarmament, "All member states must sincerely support all initiatives leading to a comprehensive disarmament on the regional and international levels, the security of the Indian Ocean and its natural extensions including the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea and prevent any type of foreign military presence in the area."

On terrorism, President Ali Abdullah said "we know what terrorism is. Everybody knows the terrorism phenomenon is strange to Muslim Yemeni society – God says in the Holy Quran – 'the scum disappears like froth

cast out while that which is for the good of mankind remains on earth.' Our people have suffered from violence since the Republic was established and adoption of democratic pluralism based on the principle of Shoura, principles of Islamic Sharia values and goals, we have been able to eliminate terrorism and violence.

"We have entered into numerous regional and international contacts with friendly countries. Our Government's policy is to fight and cooperate with the international community to uproot terrorism.

"Yemen has gone through a number of bomb attacks in the last 2 years and is suspected to be the work of Al-Qaeda, causing huge damage to our stability and security.

"The world seems to have ignored the terrible holocaust that has occurred in the nation of the Arabian Peninsula that opens into the Red Sea which is one of the oldest civilizations, going back to 1000 B.C.

"The January 13, 1986 coup in South Yemen staged with heavy artillery tanks and missiles, brought down the Ali Nasser Mohammed regime killing thousands of people and destroying houses, hospitals and schools. Today there are more than 30,000 refugees from South Yemen living in camps on the outskirts of Sana'n in North Yemen.

"Not a word of protest has been heard from the Arab nations, the Arab League or the Non-aligned Movement. Coups or revolutions as the Yemenites like to call these adventures, are common in this part of the Arabian Peninsula.

"Tribal rivalries have dominated the scene before and after the 1962 revolution, which brought an independent status to Yemen and also divided them. South Yemen became the Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen in 1969 and North Yemen became the Yemen Arab Republic in 1970, and yet the two Yemens are committed to the

principle of reunification within the framework of the common cultural heritage, dating back to 4,000 years.

"Civil wars and tribal rivalries have retarded any progress in re-unification; the tribal society remains unchanged in its basic structure as in the pre-Islam days. The East West alignment is another hindrance. The Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen has a 20-year friendship treaty with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. The Yemen Arab Republic has adopted a policy of neutrality and has relations with the West and the Eastern bloc of nations and follows a policy of non-alignment," he said.

North Yemen has remained isolated from the world for a long time. The Imams who ruled the country wanted to keep the world out. It was only in the twentieth century after a long period of monotheism, Judaism, polytheism and Islam that Yemen was opened to the outside world. Diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, China and other countries were established and foreign trade began to bring economic prosperity. But traditional factionalism has played a destructive role all along. The Shia-Sunni conflict which had begun in the 7th century played havoc with unity.

Modern Yemen is an organic blend of ancient Sabean-Himyaritic and Islamic culture. The 1962 revolution put an end to a thousand years of the Imamate. The land of the Queen of Sheba is one of the oldest civilizations and from Saba (Sheba) the oldest of the ancient dynasties have descended the people of present day Yemen. They had one language and wrote in the Musnad script.

"North Yemen with its rich natural resources is more economically viable and better developed," said President Ali Abdullah Saleh. His attempts at national unity and fair administration under a freely elected Parliament are high watermarks. Since 1978 there has been stability and gradual development of the economy epitomized by the

construction of the new dam at Marib. The country has completed two Five Year Plans with the help of Saudi Arabia and international agencies.

The Third Plan took off (1987-1991) but was pruned down due to the large-scale influx of refugees. Until recently, the country had relied on the large remittances from its labour force in the GULF countries, which are gradually thinning out. With the discovery of oil in 1985 it developed an alternative income. Tourism is also growing fast as a foreign exchange earner.

In Sana'a the capital of North Yemen one meets people from Europe, Japan, South Korea and the USA who are there to bid for contracts for the construction of public buildings and roads, as well as for negotiating joint ventures in industrial and agro-based industries. Foreign banks are offering loans on soft terms for projects that could be marketed to third countries.

As the manager of the Taj-Sheba hotel Mr. Vilas Humbre said in five years the face of Sana'a will take on a modern look and there will be the need for five star hotels. Even today it could do with a couple of more, as the demand for accommodation in the city's two five star hotels was heavy, he said.

Feudalism and tribal animosities is pushing the country back by 50 years. The question of reunification of the two Yemens, illiteracy and backwardness are the main virus in the body politic. Unification was first broached in 1972 with a number of agreements reached on economic issues but it remained a thorny issue.

The North has basically a free enterprise economy, while the South is a Communist country, but not so radical after Mr. Ali Nasser Mohammed came to power.

The repercussions of the Aden coup of 1986 are having their effect in North Yemen, thousands of families have

left their homes and moved to the North among them are 8,000 officers and soldiers of the armed forces. The responsibility is heavy on the Government in Sana'a which is spending \$10 million a month on these refugees.

"We cannot desert them. We are one people, we cannot send them back. We realise that the national situation poses a danger to our national security. The political leadership in Aden has not shown any interest in starting a dialogue for peace efforts but we have not lost hope. This is not the first time that people have crossed over but it is the first time that such large numbers have come. The burden is heavy more so, because the Gulf countries have refused to take them," said Dr. Kareem al-Eryani, the Yale-educated Foreign Minister.

The former President of South Yemen Mr. Ali Nasser Mohammed his Council of Ministers, the Chief Justice and other high officials were living in North Yemen. Mr. Nasser has been condemned to death by the Aden court. In an interview he said that, "the majority of the educated elite have fled. Every day more than 20 families are crossing over to the North. In 20 years of freedom there have been five major coups."

The main reason for dissent against the Ali Nasser regime were that he was trying to introduce land reforms, an open democracy encouraging private enterprise and moving towards reunification. The 1979 agreement for a united constitution was sabotaged by vested interests. Objection was taken even to handing over the Gandhi Memorial Hall in Aden to the Indian community as this symbolized privatization.

Mr. Nasser had held the first free elections in the country in 1978. Now all members of the elected Government and doctors, lawyers, writers, judges, businessmen and farmers have left the country. Is there

any hope of a settlement and return of the refugees to their homes?

"We have formed a National Reconciliation Committee asking for the release of all detained persons in jails, who are said to number 10,000 and rehabilitation of those who have lost their homes. Nearly 100,000 people have either fled or been killed," said Mr. Nasser.

The question is asked again and again. Why is the world looking the other way to a situation that threatens to blow up? Why are the Arab leaders indifferent to a time bomb which is ticking away and may explode into another war in the Gulf? The Non-Aligned Movement has a responsibility in bringing a peaceful solution in the tiny nation that straddles the whole of South Arabia.

Shahbanu Farah

A beautiful face is seldom the hallmark of wisdom, though there have been notable exceptions in history. Farah Pahlavi, Shahbanu of Iran, an outstanding exception, is one of them who was visiting Delhi with the Shahenshah. "The only satisfaction I get out of life is having my people love me," she says. "Being a queen, living in a palace, having jewels mean absolutely nothing to me. It is having the confidence of the people that I care about".

She meant every word of this, as is evident from her actions. When on December 29, 1959, the 21-year-old Farah Diba wedded Shahenshah Aryamehr Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, all the young bride wanted was the devoted love of her husband. As she became a mother, and her inherent intelligence blossomed with maturity, she emerged as a remarkably bright, gracious woman, dignity personified. Her service to her people has brought satisfaction in their love for her, the Empress with a heart of gold.

Empress Farah was no passive, royal showpiece or fashion queen but a hard-working, well-informed personality whose keen intelligence and independent ideas have established her as a national figure in her own right among the people of Iran. A good part of the success of the "white revolution" set in motion by the Shah is due to her untiring efforts and popularity.

The Shahbanu was a staunch fighter to improve the well-being and living standards of the common people. Her

public welfare activities were not a mere publicity stunt nor a news-making gimmick as is common with royalty and high society women in many other countries.

With a quiet determination and persistence she has taken active personal interest in promoting and improving conditions for the care of the sick, the destitute, the needy, the blind, deaf and dumb and the handicapped.

Children are Her Majesty's special concern, mother love being her dominating passion. It is not surprising that her four children, 14-year-old Crown Prince Reza, Princess Farahnazm (11), Prince Ali Reza (8), and Princess Leila (4), receive personal care and attention from their mother.

Personally, the Shahbanu would like to have more children than her four, "but it would be a bad example to our people", she said. Iran has an active family planning programme.

Her Majesty was seriously concerned at the high birth rate in Iran, which was 3.2 percent. Asked whether children are the principal victims of malnutrition and poverty, her reaction was: "That is a very painful thing to ask". The sight of handicapped children makes her sad.

Her wish is to see all children in her country happy and healthy and having the means for a good education. Towards this ideal, she has energetically launched many programmes. She has organized and supervised child welfare centres, an organization for the protection of children and children's medical centres.

The Shahbanu was responsible for a law forbidding carpet manufacturers from exploiting child labour, a long-prevailing practice which brought about blindness among children before they were even 13 years old.

Her Majesty also encourages children's art and film festivals and sports activities all over Iran. She does not extend mere royal patronage to these organizations but

personally supervises them and keeps herself posted with their day-to-day functioning.

Her Majesty is the active patron of 25 social welfare and educational organizations in Iran. She is not involved in these activities just because she is the consort of the Shah but also because she is sincerely interested in the welfare of humanity.

Education of women is another of her tireless interests. Some higher councils of education are actually directed and guided by her. The Shahbanu spends six hours of the day visiting, directing and guiding social welfare or educational activities.

A staunch supporter of women's rights, she is not a mere crusader but concerns herself with drafting or modifying laws and regulations concerning the welfare of children and women. With guidance and support from the Shah, Farah has been able to raise the status of her countrywomen and to free them from the shackles of age-old prejudices and customs.

The freedom and prestige the women of Iran command today are entirely the result of the efforts of the Shahbanu and the Shah's sister, Princess Ashraf. Since 1963, when the Shah introduced bold reforms like enfranchisement of women, progress has leapt forward in all fields.

"Women have entered Parliament, they serve in the armed forces and the police, sit as judges, run business enterprises, serve as diplomats, doctors, dentists, engineers – and also do the rock at modern discotheques. What is more, they receive equal pay with men and have the right to divorce," said Shahbanu.

All this has to be seen against the background of only a decade ago, when the law prohibited them the right to vote, thereby equating them with fraudulent bankrupts, beggars, and those who earn their living in a disreputable

way, murderers, thieves and other criminals punishable under the Islamic code.

"Earlier, when the veil was abolished in 1936, universities and government offices opened their doors to women. But it was not a smooth changeover as there was a great deal of opposition from the orthodox."

But the newly emancipated women were not prepared to surrender their newly acquired rights meekly so they organized themselves with the support of Princess Ashraf and the Shahbanu.

Women's councils have formed in many parts of the country under the Iranian Women's Organisation. This is not just a coffee club but a full-time body for social work run on competent business lines. It has research and planning units, committees on new legislation, education, health and family welfare, an employment bureau and a cultural section encouraging artistes.

This organization has 32 centres looking after the children of working mothers, legal counsel and training institutes for women and family planning centres. It has trained more than 20,000 women in vocational training. Through this organization 11,000 girls have been sent to the rural areas to spread literacy among women.

IWO has a number of achievements to its credit. It has brought about legislation concerning marriage, divorce and custody of children. The most important of these laws restricts polygamy and provide protection for the family. Another progressive step was the family planning programme and the liberalisation of abortion.

The average Iranian family formerly consisted of seven to thirteen children. Now the 2000 clinics in the country teach women birth control. "It was mainly because of lack of education and ignorance that the families used to have large numbers of children," the Shahbanu said in an

interview. "People have no right to have children if they cannot feed them properly and give them proper education".

About women, the Shahbanu feels strongly that their biological role and the importance of family values for society have to be acknowledged. Asian society is aware of this role, and stability of the family is the key to social advance, she feels.

Family, social and health programmes have received a great impetus under the direction of the Shahbanu. Her concern for the blind and the leper is so great that she had invited Indian and foreign doctors to work in Iran. Iran has undertaken intensive research on leprosy and cancer and Indian doctors had helped greatly in this task. The Shah's White Revolution had swept new life to Iran's villages and people.

The Shahbanu brought about a cultural renaissance in the visual and performing arts of Iran. She had studied architecture at L'Ecole Speciale d'Architecture in Paris. The spurt of activities in drama, music, literature and poetry one sees in Iran today is due to her initiative. Very often the Empress invites artists to the royal palace in Tehran to discuss art with her.

She had restored pride in old Iranian traditions and handicrafts shunned by westernised women in her country. She appeared in public dressed in traditional Iranian textiles of printed and embroidered material, thus setting a trend which Iranian society women rushed to copy.

"Going ahead with the times does not necessarily mean that one should abandon one's tradition and culture. We must retain our local and regional customs. There is no reason whatsoever that if we establish an atomic centre we should tear down a gateway of ancient tile work. We must retain both," was her statement made in a firm tone.

Begum Liaquat Ali Khan

The first woman Ambassador of Pakistan was to The Hague. She was one of those fascinating personalities that is a journalist's delight. Uninhibited, she had a pleasant way of talking and holding the listeners' attention. On a private visit to Delhi in the seventies, the wife of the first Prime Minister of Pakistan was quick to make friends and create good impressions. An active social worker in her country, to her goes the credit of revolutionizing the status of women in her country. As early as 1948 she brought together large numbers of women from all walks of life under the banner of Pakistan Women's National Guard – a women's Army for national service. A year later, she started the All Pakistan Women's Association, which grew into a formidable status.

The seventies saw the emergence of women in Pakistan as an important and vital force under her leadership. No mean task for a woman in a country of rigid conservatism and religious norms as Pakistan was. Soon after independence, Begum Liaquat Ali Khan was appointed as Ambassador to The Hague – Holland. For the next twelve years she was Ambassador to Italy and Tunisia. In Holland she was Dean of the diplomatic corps – earlier she was a member of her country's delegation to the United Nations. Begum Liaquat Ali Khan had many firsts to her credit and

* The interview was held before the birth of Bangladesh

was quite an important figure in international circles and back home. After a long innings in foreign service, she came back home to her favourite field of work – social work among women and children. The All Pakistan Women's Association was reactivated and went all out to help and rehabilitate the families who had been uprooted in the 1947 partition.

On one of her visits to Delhi I was introduced by a common friend to Begum Khan. She agreed to my request for an interview.

On the social consciousness that was aroused among women in Pakistan she said "You, Hindu women in India are ahead of us, you had a 50-year start before us when Mahatma Gandhi campaigned for women's emancipation but Muslim women roused themselves only after the Partition of our countries. Women are naturally gifted and have an aptitude for social work and for acts of mercy. Our women, belonging to all sections of society are clamouring for more educational facilities now and there is an awareness of their rights," said Begum Liaquat Ali Khan.

Was it easy to get support from religious leaders and politicians whose mindset was steeped in prejudices, old traditions and backwardness?

"Nothing is easy or simple against old traditions and prejudices, it was after partition that our women roused themselves having seen the plight of refugees. Women from all walks of life came forward to help in the refugee camps throwing away their veils, they worked as nurses, drivers, policed the refugee camps, ran lost and found bureaux, started Homes for children and destitute women, they did a marvelous job considering that all their lives they were in Purdah".

Explaining further the Begum said, "the Pakistan

Women's Association became a formidable body with a legal status, all the work of running schools, colleges, clinics, maternity homes, hospitals, training centers, blind schools, home for Juveniles, delinquents are run by our women. We have made tremendous march forward and now our women are demanding more amenities. Political consciousness is growing among our educated women. We have been able to get reserved seats in Parliament. A family Law Bill was passed in Parliament, Divorce and Polygamy are now legal issues in my country."

Elaborating further, she said that women enjoy all rights and privileges but not many educated women have come forward to politics. She blamed the existing educational system—an inheritance from the British Raj for ills facing the youth. "Universities and colleges merely turn out graduates who go to the streets looking for jobs. The students are most vociferous and have a right to be heard. These are some of the problems facing Paksitan" said Begum Liaquat Ali Khan. As education prospects increase we are finding it difficult to find volunteers for social work. The young are not interested, they want jobs in offices, they think this sphere of activity is earmarked for the older generation." She said that more and more women from the tribal communities are coming forward, the demand for admission to colleges is far exceeding the number of seats".

"Illiteracy which had been a major problem is no more, eighty per cent of our women in the villages could not read or write. The situation has shown a remarkable change – today it is not an uncommon sight to see women sitting in classes with their children. Women today surpass men at the university level, more than 70000 women hold high positions in government and private enterprises. The rate of employment is 99.95 per cent in East Pakistan. Nearly

85 per cent of the women constitute the labour force in East Pakistan on tea plantations. In West Pakistan the majority are in community services and manufacturing industries. The clamour for vocational education among women of the seventies are emerging as a strong force to meet the demands of a modern nation," said Begum Liaquat Ali Khan, a pleasing woman with impeccable manners.

Razali Ismail

Mr. Razali Ismail was Malaysia's High Commissioner to India. Later, he became President of the UN General Assembly. Currently he is U.N. Special Envoy to trouble spots especially he has been talking to Myanmar government regarding freeing of Suu Kyi, the duly elected leader of Myanmar.

It was meant to be a friendly chat that afternoon in Kuala Lumpur of Sept, 2001 but the question came like a blast enough to unnerve me. I have known Mr. Razali Ismail from his days as High Commissioner in Delhi and am familiar with his candour and forthright manner which is a Razali characteristic. "Why doesn't India settle the Kashmir problem it is far too long and the UN is bored with Kashmir. Settle it, finish it. Anyway you think best. It has gone too long and everytime the Kashmir issue comes up there is a loud yawn, everyone is bored with it. It is time the whole business was settled once and for all peacefully or any other way, India must settle it, a final decision is overdue," said Mr. Razali Ismail, former President of the UN General Assembly (41st session).

After the initial disorientation at the outburst I asked "what do you think India should do?" "Finish it, end the whole matter the only way that is left, the Indian government should know best," was the reply in his impeccable forthright style.

Kashmir cannot hold the ground for long in a friendly

chat running to two hours so we went on to matters of relevance nearer home. Malaysia's revival process after the financial crisis – "The economic process of transformation is to deal with VAT taxes and move away to substitute sick and debt-ridden industries with electronic industries where we can compete. Industry and banking has to be consolidated. Malaysia will not allow to be taken in by 'strategic industries'. Our autonomous industries have a good market and is protected," said Mr. Razali.

To a question of Indo-ASEAN relation, he sees immense possibilities for joint ventures in the areas of technology – IT and machine technology, "particularly as India is in a good position to be closer to ASEAN. The free market policy in India," said Razali, "has been successful by all accounts, the volume, the size of ASEAN to undertake projects and enter the Indian market from where it can move into the South Asian countries is a factor that should be under consideration."

Stressing on the subject he said, "ASEAN products are of no use unless we spread out, it has not been done fast enough instead the concentration has been on China and East Asia, the ability to compete should be explored it is easy to do business with India, not China."

On Malaysia-India relationship, Mr. Razali Ismail said, "Our countries should get closer in the fields of IT as the progress made by India is excellent and our embassies must be geared towards achieving a close partnership. The chemistry," he said, "has not mixed as we got preoccupied with internal problems and India with the west."

Mr. Razali is of the view that a visit of India's Prime Minister to Malaysia may open more areas of cooperation that are close and to mutual benefit. "A medium level leadership is emerging in Malaysia both in the economic and social systems, the caste system in India is sharper than

before and this seems to have an effect in this country. The changes in political and cultural is a retreat from the secular. The perception in this region is that India is retreating from its non-communal principle because of politics. There is a bond of affection between India and Malaysia, it is up to the two countries to value this sentiment."

"The Malaysian psychology is to meet friends half-way," says the former diplomat now chairman of companies on IT, Environment and Turnkey projects, "and fight to death." Indian joint ventures have lagged behind, both our countries have a surfeit of talent among our young. This should be channeled into result-oriented ventures. Our young entrepreneurs should meet and start together companies in the field of Info-Technology, engineering technology and environment related technologies. The young minds of today are sharper and more enterprising," said Razali Ismail.

On the question of expansion of ASEAN, he says – "if you can have framework for Integration on a regional basis and economic well-being of the countries, it should not pose many problems, but surely there will crop up differences of opinion. As far as Malaysia is concerned the scene is not as gloomy as it is in some other countries. In South East Asia this country is on the upward trend. Our industry is getting back to normal on a sound investment moorings – rumblings on the emergence of fundamentalism can be unnerving racial-antagonism does not work in Malaysia. This is a trend introduced by political forces and mainly the result of innumerable political parties that have emerged in recent years," replied Mr. Razali Ismail.

Anerood Jugnauth

How private is private and that too when a very important person like a Prime Minister from a foreign country is in town, perhaps that is what makes a Prime Minister tick, not being so private after all. Mr. Anerood Jugnauth, the Mauritius Prime Minister, told me that he is here to meet his daughter Shalini and her Indian husband Kishen Malhotra, who were recently married.

But the private moments for Mr Jugnauth were few and far between as the Indian Government took some of his time, with a press conference thrown in and, the Prime Minister and the President hosting dinners and lunches—so the Mauritius Prime Minister on his first visit to India has his hands full. To cap it all Sunday was the 25th wedding anniversary of the Jugnauths. Mr. Anerood Jugnauth is certainly coming next month on a state visit and again for the nonaligned conference in March.

It was six months ago this London-educated Bhojpuri-speaking lawyer and former leader of the opposition came to power when his party the Mauritius Militant Movement was voted by a 100 per cent majority vote defeating the twenty-year-old Ramgoolam government. Mr. Jugnauth's government is a coalition of three parties—the MMM, the PSM and the OPR of the Rodrigez Island; even if it is not a homogenous grouping, it is a government determined to rule and correct the mistakes of the old government. They want to deliver the goods. Hence some friction is bound to

emerge as happened recently when the Finance Minister resigned in haste and relented at leisure over the pricing policy of foodstuff.

"We are taking a number of measures that may not be popular but we are doing it in the interests of the country. We have to rectify our balance of payments, we have a deficit budget and unemployment; we have offered incentives to foreign investors especially in the Free Processing Zones; our unemployment is 80 per cent in a population of less than a million; the previous government left the economy in a mess. This is the reason they were voted out, we are now trying to relaunch the economy. Sugar and tourism are our main foreign exchange earners. There has to be amore dynamic effort in this area," said Mr. Anerood Jugnauth, in an exclusive interview.

Has he to face the problems of dissidents and floor-crossing?

"I would not call them dissidents but two of my cabinet ministers belonged to the previous government. They had been expelled from their party and are sitting as independents. I have retained them in my cabinet. I do not approve of crossing the floor. We are finding ways and means to prevent this by inserting a clause in the Constitution, and to hold general elections every five years and provide for a referendum. If by any chance elections have to be postponed, after the referendum Parliament must by unanimous vote pass the Bill. Will also hold byelections which have been abolished by the previous government and municipal elections which have not been held for many years; we want to get back on the road to a consolidated democracy. These measures may not be popular with some people who may create problems but in the larger interests it has to be done," was his reply.

On the question of Diego Garcia, Mr. Anerood

Jugnauth has very strong views. He has already appointed a select committee to go into the question of how it came into being, the former Prime Minister Ramgoolam has already appeared before the Committee.

"We are raising our voice loud and clear with the UK and the US and we maintain that it was illegally taken away from us and should be returned. I have told Mrs. Thatcher in no uncertain terms, the pressure will be kept up in the interests of world peace. The Indian Ocean must remain a zone of peace. Diego Garcia must be returned to us."

On relations with India Mr. Jugnauth is picking up the links that were left to rust by the previous government. The Joint Economic Commission has not met for many years, why the two governments let it lapse is a surprise. "We are reviving this most actively, the last government wanted to have a monopoly with the Indian government. They took things for granted. It is common talk in Mauritius that the Ramgoolam government was held in danger at India's heart over the Diego Garcia question."

Mr Jugnauth's wife Sarojini, who is accompanying him, is a Inspector of Schools and she has not given up her job. A third generation of Indian origin whose people went from Bihar Mr. Jugnauth was Queen's Council, he resigned and went into private practice. In 1963 he joined politics and was a member of parliament, he was Minister of Planning and Development and later Minister for Labour when he resigned after a difference of opinion with the Ramgoolam government.

Maumoon Abdul Gayoom

The years have matured him; he is more sure of himself; the confidence he exudes is a promise that Maldives has a future that will make it rise as an important nation, not only among SAARC but in the south east Asian region as whole. Standing 5 ft 2 inches in his shoes, the bespectacled Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, third time President of Maldives, perhaps for life, does not need any more aides to prompt him to answer loaded questions from media persons.

The Maumoon Abdul Gayoom I had met eight years ago has come a long way shedding his diffidence. The Maldives President today strides his 200 islands like the proverbial colossus. Two unfortunate invasion attempts on the island have only made him stronger. His new determination to take the tiny population of 2,11,000 men, women and children towards a better life and an awareness of the world beyond, bodes well for the future of Maldives.

Criticism and adverse comments have given him an insight and a maturity to avoid alienating his government from the people. That the ruled and the ruler have a common objective and need close rapport is his view. A scholar of Islamic law who graduated from the famous Al Azhar University of Cairo, he is a staunch Muslim who should not be mistaken for a fundamentalist. He has respect for other religions. He neither smokes nor drinks. His stay in New York as permanent representative at the United

Nations and as teacher at the American University in Cairo and Kano University in Nigeria, has only broadened his outlook with an understanding for other religions.

"Maldives is an Islamic state, but we are not fanatics nor could anyone call us fundamentalists," stated the President. He had said this eight years ago to this correspondent on his first state visit to India.

Mr. Gayoom made it clear that he had to seek India's help in order to save his people and the nation's sovereignty. "I could not let them down and run away to safety. We do not have a full-fledged army. I was right calling for help which came promptly and saved our country. India is a good and old friend of ours and the 60 odd men of the armed forces who are left in Maldives will remain as long as we want them. We need them for some more time as investigations are still going on. I was right in calling for help from India," he said.

He was here on a working visit "mainly to discuss the forthcoming summit of SAARC and bilateral matters". The visit was scheduled to take place before the aborted invasion. "Maldives has sought more scholarships and training of its security forces. The Indo-Maldives Joint Commission will meet next month to finalise details."

The Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdulla Jameel, recalled that the security forces had alerted the President within half an hour of the invasion. The President and his family were taken to a safe place. "Fortunately our telephone lines were reconnected by our people and we had our own communication system through which the President called Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. Everyone including the invaders thought that the President was out of the country," he said.

"They could not have taken over the country as our people would have resisted. How would they rule without knowing Dhivehi? Through an interpreter?"

The Foreign Minister complained that some of the media men who had descended on Maldives had given distorted versions of the events. They had fabricated stories and faked interviews. Some of these stories were published in the foreign press. "This may have been the reason why some countries tried to cast aspirations on India. These pressmen created problems for us. Arms dealers and phony journalists approached us with many suggestions," he remarked.

Asked if Maldives would host the next SAARC, Mr. Jameel said that Maldives had no infrastructural facilities to host such a big conference. "We cannot accommodate 500 delegates and pressmen in one place. Maybe, we could host a ministerial conference some time," he replied.

Fuad Mohieddin

In a wide ranging talk starting from Indo-Egyptian relations to the Reagan Plan, Dr. Fuad Mohieddin, Prime Minister of Egypt, stressed the need for strengthening Indo-Egyptian relations in view of president Mubarak's policy of coming closer to the Asian countries.

"Indo-Egyptian relations have for some years been cool without much activity on either side. How would you view it now?"

"This was a misunderstanding, if you allow me to say so. There was a cooling off for no reasons, but after the two visits to India of President Mubarak really all deadwood has been brushed away and the two countries are coming closer again. The forthcoming visit of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to Egypt will add to the strengthening efforts we are making to record a history of the special position politically that the non-aligned movement has created. A fresh chapter will be opened in Indo-Egypt relations. We are working towards that goal. This will be reactivated. The joint commission between our two countries has not met for long. It will be reconvened soon. I am afraid that economic relations are not as it should be. There is a lot that can be done—exchange of technology, experts and we can start training programmes in the nuclear and engineering fields. A start will soon be made. Trade will also be reactivated soon."

"As India and Egypt are manufacturers of similar

items, do you think joint projects in third countries could be started?"

"There is some difficulty in this, as we are not capital exporters—we do not have the capital but Egypt is trying to assist countries in Africa as India is doing in many ways—we of course, have the resources in technology and manpower and we assist our friends in Africa in the field of technology, education, agriculture and manpower—we have to evolve a philosophy of coordination and cooperation in this field."

"President Mubarak has said he is keen on coming closer to the Asian countries in his foreign policy outcome, his recent visits to some of the Asian countries were perhaps a beginning—can you elaborate?"

"President Mubarak's Asian visit was actually initiated from his non-aligned concept—his first visit was to India. Later he visited a few other countries, you know Japan is one of our largest aid-givers as soft loans—the main push to the East in Asia, not *ostpolitik* (laughs) but non-aligned *politik* in origin, you know Egypt is partly Asian and we want a strong friendship with Asia. This is part of our foreign policy strategy."

"In what fields can cooperation be started – do you visualize an era of close understanding and collaboration in many fields?"

"I am very much excited at the idea of promoting close cooperation with India. This cooperation activity was started in the last few months and East is East—we in the developing countries of the East must be very constructive in our efforts because India is an example to others, its agricultural achievements and self-sufficiency in food and success in industry is a model to others. This has been achieved inspite of increased population in India. We are also going through a population explosion and are suffering

because of it, yet we have made some progress. Other countries in Africa can benefit from this model. Then there is a democratic system and experience which also could be copied. Ours which is a special model which suits our needs. Let us pray that relations between our two countries will develop and grow stronger as to benefit other countries in our region. We can buy more from each other and start joint ventures and institute training programmes for Egyptian technicians as India has many high level technical institutes. In Egypt we lack skilled manpower as large numbers have left for the Gulf countries. We can meet this shortage by training our people in India. There is wide range of possibility of cooperation between us and god willing, we will jointly make a success. I am very keen on promoting this friendship with India," he said.

"Instead of looking for Western technology—that may not always suit our needs—don't you think that the better developed countries of the Third World could assist the lesser developed and also conduct research to improve their existing technology?" I asked.

"In my view I feel both technologies from the West and ours can be used; advanced technology is necessary for progress. It is a continued process and the developing countries cannot do without Western technologies. We can certainly offer our technologies to the lesser developed but advanced technology is necessary for India and Egypt. Surely research can be conducted by countries like India and Egypt to improve our technology but this is a very expensive business. We do not have the finances for it but we certainly can conduct research on applied research not basic research—we can offer our applied research to Western countries in exchange. India and Egypt can start combined research programmes regarding basic research. This can be transferred from advanced countries without

political interference. In the future, we must be attentive and cautious that 'scientific colonialism' does not strangle us."

"Do you think meeting of UNCTAD next month in Belgrade will produce any results?"

"UNCTAD countries have poor resources but if we come together and mobilize our resources and enter into fruitful cooperation and coordination we will achieve something. This is part of South South doctrine – the rich countries also can do a lot. We must enter into a North-South dialogue – it is very important for an exchange of technology more experience more informative – cooperation of the North is necessary for the non-aligned countries to achieve something in future," he replied.

"What are your views on the Williamsburg meeting of the industrialised countries—do you think Non-Aligned Movement should have an observer status at that meeting?"

"An observer status should be welcomed as a dialogue with the industrialised nations by NAM will yield cooperation which is in the interest of the developing countries. We cannot achieve something unless we start a dialogue."

"Do you see Egypt once again assuming leadership of the Arab world?"

"This is a very delicate question. We are not looking for that—we are not interested in leadership of Arab countries. We are part of the Arab world, we are 45 million, we have 12 universities. We are exporting manpower to other states and expertise and other different activities. We are brothers you know, we can give them all that they need—an integration and contemplation among us is necessary. Our relations are close but there is no search for leadership."

"It is felt widely that the Arab unity is a myth. Would you agree?"

"Let us speak about coordination, one goal, one policy, friendship—these are the tenets—this should bring unity."

"Although Egypt was one of the founding members of the OAU—you were kept out by divisive forces—today the OAU is facing a serious crisis and is almost disintegrating. Will Egypt do anything to revive the organization?"

"Of course we have to. We are very keen on reactivating the OAU. We are one of the builders of OAU. We are ready to attend the next meeting at Addis Ababa although we did not attend last two meetings. Ideological forces should not be allowed to destroy the OAU. President Mubarak may attend the next meeting at Addis Ababa. We will convince other countries also to attend. The problems of Chad, Sahara and other problems can be tackled if the organization is strong but some are trying to corrupt and destroy the organization. This should not be allowed. We have been talking with African leaders on the problems of OAU, we are very keen on the OAU moving forward. We in Africa do not want to lose this important organization," was his elaborate reply.

"Do you think the American Secretary of State Mr. George Shultz's visit will produce satisfactory results?"

"Mr. Shultz has tried to do his best on his visit to the East. He has given, emphasis to the quick and positive withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon, there are possibilities of optimism. In this particular question which will enable a sovereign Lebanon to rule itself. Our relations with Lebanon and the US are good since the aggression in Lebanon. We have not stopped our efforts to urge for a complete withdrawal—Shultz talks was a part of that process."

"Was the Shultz visit at Egypt's initiative?"

"Not really, the US is interested in peace in the Middle East. We felt the talks may lead to something positive. The Reagan proposal has same positive aspects. So why not agree with everything in the Reagan Plan."

"Will Jordan be invited to the peace proposals?"

"Jordan has an important role to play in the future on the PLO question. King Hussain and the PLO can come together with a formula regarding the formation of a delegation to the peace talks."

"Will Syria and the PLO be asked to move out of Lebanon at the same time as Israel?"

"All foreign troops Syrian as well as Israeli must withdraw from Lebanon but Shultz talks were confined to Israeli withdrawal only."

"When will Egypt resume the Camp David talks?"

"No date has been fixed. The second phase of talks has already started but was stalemated on the question of autonomy of the West Bank and the Gaza strip. There was radically a difference of opinion, now the Reagan initiative is something new and talks must be resumed soon."

"You had suspended trade with Israel on the wake of the Lebanese crisis—Israel has not stopped buying oil from you—25 per cent of its oil is from Egypt. Are you planning to resume economic and trade relations with Israel?"

"Yes, all trade was suspended with Israel from last June after the aggression in Lebanon—our relations were affected due to war. But a few days ago we received a delegation of Israeli businessmen in Egypt to discuss trade and other economic relations—we will start trade with Israel soon. Israel is buying oil from us on international prices."

"There was a lot of misgivings and opposition from Arab countries on the Camp David Accord. Would you

say that Camp David has been a positive step towards peace?"

"Of course, the withdrawal from Sinai was one of the very best results of Camp David. You know our people had really appreciated this accord. It was a concrete and positive step. We signed the peace treaty and will honour and have honoured all our agreements. The Arab countries have criticized the Camp David Accord but have any one of them taken positive steps to liberate the Arab land occupied by others. Public opinion in Egypt was happy that we signed the peace treaty. This has positively contributed to peace in the area—we got our land back—relations with Arab countries do not affect us inspite of the Baghdad Conference it affected diplomatic relations with a few Arab countries."

"Were the promises to assist Egypt financially by some Arab countries kept?"

"No. We received aid from other countries but the Arabs came to invest in industry in Egypt. 50 per cent of the total investment was from them, nearly 50 per cent of our tourism come from the Arab states," replied Fuad Mohieddin.

Julius Nyrere

Julius Kambarage Nyrere, President of Tansania whose frequent visits to New Delhi for the Non-alignment meet or the Africa Fund Meetings had made him a familiar figure. The African President was always more than willing for a press encounter and had always something to say as those were troublesome days for the African continent. Having met him during his visits and being able to speak a bit of Swahili as I had lived in Dar-es-salaam a couple of years as a teenager, he always agreed to a chat, but that day I found him off mood. Perhaps it was the long travel.

Short snappy answers and a demeanour that signified frustration. His mind was far away. "The Africa Fund has been instituted at the right time, we are going through a bad phase economically and it is time we put our hand to the plough" he said. On non-alignment-a contentious issue among the third world in the sixties-seventies, Nyrere said, "although we are in principle united there still exists some vestiges of colonialism in some parts of Africa."

"Has OAU (Organisation of African Unity) lost its purpose or strength of purpose?"

"We have some difference among us, but one should realize that the OAU has played a useful role in African affairs for example, decolonisation, social and economic problems. I don't deny that we have had some setbacks but they are minor problems, it takes time, with long years

of colonial suppression it needs time to change an embedded mindset. OAU today is the only voice that speaks for all Africa" said Julius Nyrere.

Under the 1967 Arusha Declaration a plan of practical dimensions to connect principles of self-reliance under the Ujama (a family head) village governance – an African variety of socialism and introducing the one party system and making Tanzania (former Tanganyika) a democratic state and uniting neighbouring Zanzibar with the mainland in 1964 were Julius Nyrere's achievements.

A former school teacher he was the first President of the Tanganyika Africa National Union founded in 1954. Needless to say TANU was the best organized mass party in the colonial Africa. The last time that I met Nyrere during his visit to New Delhi was in 1983. I found him changed a slow and much subdued man, he appeared to be in frustration and irritation seemed to have taken hold. Things are not moving fast enough to his liking, economic development was slow almost eluding him, but today's transformation in Tanzania was entirely due to him. Once the poorest country it is now better known for its policies and moral approach to problems. Its emphasis on humanitarian views, development and social problems is widely respected.

Some sections of the African leadership considered Nyrere's ideas and outlook as utopian. They were somewhat suspicious of his sincerity. Yet he was able to bring political stability and introduce constitutional reforms unheard of in post-colonial Africa.

"Has the non-aligned movement been able to unite the third world despite contradictions and disagreement and divided loyalties diverse culture and religion?" I asked *Malimu* ('teacher' in Swahili). Nyrere was popularly called 'Malimu' in East Africa.

After a well considered pause he replied, "Don't you have difference with your family sometime, differences are bound to the there even loyalties but the fact that we meet once a year shows we have a common cause and we need to stand united to achieve something. All nations have their own interests and reasons that is why I am advocating self reliance. The essential thing is a strong balance of democratic views and a united front among African nations. We have to make efforts to create unity and economic progress." But countries under dictatorship would not take seriously the concept of non-alignment.

A great admirer of Jawaharlal Nehru and later of Indira Gandhi, Julius Nyrere often said, "Africa needs close cooperation and assistance from India who understands our problems."

On his last visit, he said rather vehemently, "the tendency of developed countries to run the affairs of less developed countries is to be deplored, leave us alone to run our business." And yet he was considered by some African leaders to be soft on the past British rulers. Salim Mohamed Salim, the former Foreign Minister of Tanzania and former High Commissioner to India and later President of the UN General Assembly, who was present, was a past master in adroitly steering thorny issues towards smooth conclusions.

"The NAM provides a unique opportunity to consider ways and means to provide genuine cooperation among countries of the South, there is no use pretending that issues and problems do not exist. In a convergence of IOI & NAM members there is bound to be differences, this is not a monolith organization, we have no common policy but our objectives are the same, it is these issues that unite and help collectively, this is what non-alignment is about and there is no threat to the unity. NAM has become a force to

reckon with. I have faced this type of argument at the United Nations" said Mr Salim.

When queried on 'consensus', "How can we have a common position? This is a movement of independent states with foreign policies linked to common objectives, unity in diversity is the need of the hour, the strength and dynamism of the movement rests on the degree of strength of all the members. We have to strive to halt the arms race and bring in a better international and just economic order." he remonstrated," remonstrated Julius Nyrere, the father figure of Tanzania.

Aruna Asaf Ali

The shining meteor of India's independence movement, Aruna Asaf Ali, is no easy person to interview. Many things go to make the "encounter" a difficult one. For one thing, she dislikes self-promoting publicity. Secondly, she is not inclined to dwell on the subject that today is nothing but "history" and last but not the least, she has gone through so many vicissitudes in life and gathered so many awards, accolades, brickbats and bouquets that there is an impatience at removing the cobwebs.

The frail looking woman, whose voice, normally on a low key can rise to a pitch and spit fire when emotions are roused and injustice is done to a rightful cause. In the small tired woman still smoulder the embers of a spirit that once made history during the freedom struggle.

The heroine of many a political battle of the forties and leader of an anti-colonial mass movement, Aruna was loved and respected for her exemplary courage. She led an underground movement and defied British laws and lathi-charges and inspired many a young man and woman to join the national movement. She was arrested by the British and imprisoned many times. When she came out she went underground and was active through the Socialist Group that she had formed.

An individualist, even from her young days, Aruna Ganguly, as she was then known as leader of the Socialist Group, had her own ideas and was not content just to be a

camp follower. Differing with some of the Congress leaders, she joined Jayaprakash Narayan and formed the Leftist Socialist Group. Her association with socialists like Dr. Baliga and Gyan Chand brought her close to the Socialist Party of the Soviet Union.

In 1953, she actively joined the Congress Party and was a member of its central committee. Two years later she left the Congress. In 1959, she was elected Mayor of Delhi – an honour she so richly deserved.

Aruna's rebellious spirit was evident even when she was a young girl. Her dedication to national cause is a legend now. She also made history when she married outside her community in the day when even intercaste marriage were rare and forbidden. Her marriage to Asaf Ali was no surprise to her political colleagues. Aruna Asaf Ali, the wife was known as a fine hostess when her husband was posted to Washington as Ambassador.

If Aruna was the heroine of the Indian independence movement she was a much respected leader of the fifties and until she quit from active politics. A relative of Rabindranath Tagore, she possess some of the qualities and ideals that the poet valued as much.

Aruna Asaf Ali was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize and the Indira Gandhi Award for National Integration. Aruna retired from active politics with the feeling that she must make way for a new brand of younger politicians who will take the nation ahead. Her love for the Nehru family was unshakeable. Nehru ranks topmost in love and respect. With Indira Gandhi it was a "love me, love me not relationship" and for Rajiv Gandhi, she has great affection and wishes him well.

A tiny figure of 76 years, all in white khadi. She was Chairman of the Patriot-Link Group of newspapers. At her office, behind her hung a framed letter from Gandhiji

written in 1946 asking her "to come out from underground..."

About the political scene today, the mellowed freedom fighter of yesteryears, will not comment. "Leave me out of it. I do not want to say anything except that I wish Rajiv well", she said.

The sati episode makes her furious at the very mention of it. "We are going back to the medieval age. It is preposterous what is going on with some politicians condoning it." Why don't women political and social workers fight against this inhuman practice?

"You cannot remove a social evil by mere legislation. People have to be educated and enlightened on the need for removing social evils that hamper progress", she says. Towards the end Aruna was a disillusioned woman.

The country will always remember Aruna Asaf Ali and what she symbolizes. It was a grand gesture when she was requested to unfurl the flag at Gowala Tank in Bombay on the 40th anniversary of Independence. For her it was a nostalgic journey taking her back to those heady days of yore when India was fighting a mighty empire and men like Gandhi, Nehru, Azad and Patel were generals in the battle and Aruna was a soldier of great daring who electrified an entire nation.

Judith Hart

Britain's overseas development aid is not a charity—many aid receiving countries think or rather public opinion is of the view that donor countries simply hand out cheques just for the asking. And this way there is so much misunderstanding. Aid is not just handing out cheques; the idea is to help Commonwealth members in their developing programmes, says Mrs. Judith Hart, the British Minister for Overseas Development.

The conscious steps towards giving aid was first taken by Britain twenty years ago "and it is an interesting fact that when my country was concerning itself almost singularly with a major war, with a possible invasion from across the channel, the British Parliament should have turned its attention to the needs of its dependent territories far overseas by-passing the Colonial Development and Welfare Act" she says.

The post-war years gave a new concept to the assistance programme; the political atmosphere also influenced the policies especially towards the needy independent countries and aid programmes grew in strength and in the past few years Britain's aid programme has been valued at 200 million pounds a year which includes capital, technical and multilateral assistance. Nearly 120 countries have benefited from Britain's aid programme. Nearly eighty per cent of the programmes are earmarked for Commonwealth countries.

Mrs. Hart, during her visit to India, emphasized the fact that Britain is conscious of the need to reach higher targets of aid but the present economic conditions at home make this difficult. Of course, Britain had agreed at the UNCTAD II (United Nations conference of Trade and Development held in Delhi in 1968 that the target of one per cent of GNP (Gross National Product) would at last be possible, "our aid position is now changing—last autumn a review of the public expenditure at home and abroad was made by the government and in the next four years we will be able to raise 300 million pounds and reach the UNCTAD target."

It is of significance that over half the Britain's aid programme, 53 per cent, is in grant form—meaning non-returnable money; only forty seven per cent is in the form of loans, and ninety per cent of these are interest free. The Labour Government when it came into power in 1964 decided to grant aid in soft terms and to bring aid activities under one head and this created the Overseas Development Ministry.

Up to one-fifth of the British aid has been channeled to India, which in figures is forty million pounds a year, and India is the largest recipient of British aid, and by 1973-74 it will increase to 300 million a year—an increase of 13 per cent. This was a wise decision and I have seen in the few weeks that I have been here that developments here are extremely impressive. This is why I am here to gain first hand knowledge of the way British assistance has been utilised," say Judith Hart in an interview with this correspondent, although the gap between gainful industry and poverty is great, yet there is a willingness to coordinate industrial production with rural programmes.

"What India needs is financial assistance unlike many countries in the Commonwealth who not only need

financial and but also technical know-how. This country has very skilled technicians who in my opinion can be lent to those underdeveloped countries," she said.

"We are aware of the burden of debt that India has to bear. This is why we in Britain took the important initiative in 1965 to provide loans on an interest-free basis with long payback period stretching up to 25 years. We also know that India has repayment problems because of the hard terms of past aid loans. And Britain through the Aid India Consortium has undertaken to contribute to India's debt relief to the extent of 7.5 million pounds a year of interest-free united loans. If the question of British industry suffering did not arise, I would recommend that untied aid be given so that you could buy in the cheapest market. British aid to India was mainly to large individual projects but after the drought of 1965-66 and again 1967, Britain changed the form of aid and converted it to non-project forms. But as the Indian economy stabilized, nearly two-thirds of aid became aid for general purposes and one-third was project aid," she said.

After the two-week tour of Mrs. Judith Hart and the discussions she held in New Delhi with the Ministry of Finance and Industrial Development—the outcome was two new agreements providing for additional assistance of 10.2 million pounds (Rs. 18.4 crores). This will enable India to make maintenance imports from Britain for the public and private sectors. The loan is interest-free and for a twenty-five year period. This loan is in addition to the 38 million pounds pledged by Britain at the last Aid India consortium. The total British aid by 1970 is 47 million pounds. The agreement also includes £1.2 million for the purchase of wheat and other grain.

Mrs. Hart who was convinced of India's efforts to raise her agricultural production said at the end of her tour, that

her government would examine the possibilities of further aid for rural development.

On the question of private investment, Mrs. Judith Hart said that British private investment has been growing fast and no doubt there will be a slow down. Indo-British concerns are exporting to Africa and Asian countries. Joint ventures in third world countries and also in India mainly for export purposes (as labour is cheap here) would be beneficial in the long run. Mrs. Hart said that individual firms are bound to wait and see a fair return for what they are making available." She also hinted at the fact that future cooperation would depend on how existing British units viewed the opportunities to make further investment in India and also to widen their existing collaboration.

Speaking in a friendly vein during the interview, Mrs. Judith Hart who has a great personal charm, said, "It seemed to me the right thing to come to India on my first visit as Minister for Overseas Development." Even before she was given the present portfolio, Mrs. Hart had been very interested in the Commonwealth countries and she has a thorough knowledge of the African Continent and the Carribean. As Minister of State for Commonwealth Affairs, she has toured extensively in most of the member countries.

Her present visit to India, the longest undertaken by an Overseas Development Minister, took her to villages in Tamil Nadu and Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and western Uttar Pradesh. "I have seen the difficulties in farming in the dry areas and I have seen your efforts in curbing population growth; this will influence me in making judgements," said she. "India and Britain have a long history in the field of collaboration and it is not a difficult job to come to mutual understanding in the future," was her comment.

Like all economists. Mrs. Hart is also of the opinion

that what India should concentrate on is trade and not aid. "You are moving out of the era of import substitution and your industry is taking increasing interest in exports and their diversification", she said at the inaugural session of the technological Collaboration Group which met here.

The fifty-six year old, Mrs. Judith Hart has a degree in economics and a first-class in sociology. A professional sociologist, she has taught and conducted research for the Ministry of Health and the Development Corporation of East Kilbride in Lanarkshire. She was an active worker in the cause of the mentally and physically handicapped. The survey on the local authority provisions for the mentally handicapped was one of the factors that made the authorities open a hospital and society workshops in Lanarkshire.

Mother of two sons, Mrs Hart has been with the Labour Government since they came to power in 1964. She was first appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary, then Minister for State for Commonwealth Affairs, later Minister for Social Security. For one year she served as Paymaster General and in the reshuffle of October last year she was given the Overseas Development portfolio.

She has been a member of Parliament since 1959. Last year she was elected co-chairman of the National Commission for Women. Mrs. hart is also on the executive committee of the Labour Party.

Sultan Bin Salmaan Al-Saud

Prince Sultan Bin Salmaan Al-Saud a young man reticent and soft-spoken was the first Muslim Arab astronaut on the space shuttle Discovery. Trained at 'NASA' and educated in the United States he was a Lt. Col. in the Saudi army. I met him at the Association of Space Explorers, 5th Planetary Congress in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in mid November, 1989. Prince Salmaan was the host of the Congress. The Association of Space Explorers is an international professional organisation of astronauts and cosmonauts who have flown in space. It was founded in 1985 in Cernay, France.

The Congress in Riyadh was a five-day affair and nearly 50 astronauts and cosmonauts, space research scholars, writer and journalists were invited from all over the world by the host country. The theme for 1989 was 'Space for Earth.' India was represented by Dr Yash Pal, former Secretary, Department for Science and technology and Director, Space Application Centre, Ahmedabad, and a distinguished scientist at the India Space Research organization. Dr. Yash Pal was awarded the 1989 prize at the Congress for his work designing a satellite information network to serve rural villages. At the main Congress hall a tele-conference via satellite was set up between Riyadh and the Rayden Planetarium, New York, the Ramada Renaissance in Washington, and the Ferban Science Center in Atlanta.

At the end of an hectic schedule I managed to get the Prince, host of the Congress for a chat. "When you are up there you realize that there is God," said Prince Sultan.

What were your feelings and reactions?

"Elation, a wonderful feeling that cannot be described. The first day we all pointed to our countries, the next day we were pointing to our continents, by the fifty day we were aware of only one earth."

Prince Sultan is a committed scientist, also an adherent to Islamic norms. His dream is to make Saudi Arabia a well-developed modern nation.

"We are constantly developing the scientific knowledge and space technology in such a way that the Saudi's will be able to maintain their religious identity and cultural values. Saudi Arabia is the cradle of Islam and has a special responsibility in exploring new horizons of scientific knowledge as ordained by the Koran," said Prince Sultan in a calm matter of fact way. "India's role in space technology is a model for developing countries and men like Nehru and Gandhi had a vision. In Saudi Arabia we are committed to our roots and Islam can never be a hindrance to technology."

Is Saudi Arabia working towards it? Have you plans to co-opt science and technology from any outside sources?

"There is enough research done on environment to meet the problems that development is bringing from space satellite technology, and if we set our minds in right perspective we can protect our environment, science and technology is developing so fast that we cannot afford to sit back and dream. You saw how communication via satellite has developed, you were a part of it at the Congress." I was on satellite talking to a scientist in Atlanta.

As a member of the executive committee of the Association of Space Explorers, he represents his country.

Do you have plans for another space flight?"

"Yes, I have an ambition to be on the next flight. We are pursuing a programme of space development and I do not rule out possibilities of our participation in any other astronomical and space event in the future," was the fully enthusiastic reply.

"Saudi Arabia is today a more disciplined country and progress and modern development with high standards in education is our aim", he said when I asked him of traditions coming in the way of progress, with a wry smile he added, "there is no camel without a hump."

Seeing is believing, they say Saudi Arabia is no longer a barren desert it has acquired all the trappings of a western modern country many of the women have acquired western education, life is not a secluded family affair any more socializing, standard of living even thought process among the elite is westernized—shopping malls are packed with the latest goods, holidaying in St. Mortiz is passé, it is Las Vegas that is calling. Education is doing wonders in changing the mindset, mind you my impressions are from the 1989 visit we are now in the 21st century.

The lunch arranged out in the desert for the participants was a precursor of modernizaion. The five star arrangements excelled for beyond a Hilton or the Grand Plaza—artistically coordinated with the Bedouin traditional décor, camel, horses, carpets, tents, attendants in traditional costumes at el. the Bedouin ambience was total. It also was an opportunity for cosmonauts or astronauts from the Soviet Union and America to a free camaraderie which brought a comment from a Soviet astronaut "why camels, even the horses have hump."

Han Suyin

Han Suyin (Rosalie), novelist, writer and China expert born in Peking—father Chinese, mother Belgian—is a trained doctor from Peking, Brussels and London. In between she left studies when she married a Chinese officer in Chiang Kai Shek's army who was later posted as Asst. Military Attache in the Chinese Embassy in London. After his death in 1947 she resumed her medical studies and later moved to Hong Kong and worked in a hospital. This was mainly because she wanted to be near China and to visit that country.

It was during this period that she met Ian Morrison, a journalist with whom she fell in love. One day while covering a war zone beat Ian was killed when his jeep ran over a landmine. Han Suyin wrote her first novel soon after based on her love and life with Ian Morrison—*A Many Splendoured Thing* was a tremendous success and was made into a film by Fox International Films in 1952. Han Suyin moved to Malaya (now Malaysia), opened her own clinic and later married a British police officer. China was going through a revolution which in turn affected the neighbouring countries and Red China was in no mood to accept Han Suyin's request for a visa.

Working as a doctor gave her an opportunity of observing people and events. She wrote her second book set against a Malayan background—*And the Rain My Drink*. A woman of tremendous grit intelligence and keen sense

of observation she dissects the uniformity of oppressiveness of the Chinese scene during the period of the Hundred Flowers and the Revolution of the fifties to 1978, woven into her own life and events of pain, love and human nature. Her narration delves deep in a most illuminating way. Her three-volume *My House has Two Doors* published in 1980 is about many loves, "about what it is to grow with love—the phoenix of my heart—this is what I have tried to do."* In an amazing style, candid and open, Han Suyin has reconstructed the events in China during 1938–48 on to 1978.

Her long wait for a visa to China finally came to an end in 1956 after many of her friends in India, like Tikki Kaul, Ratan Nehru both former Ambassadors to China and Malcolm McDonald, the British High Commissioner posted in India had helped her. Han Suyin's first visit to Delhi was in 1955. She had been invited by the British High Commissioner, this was when I met her at the High Commissioner's house. I found her to be a warm and friendly person and sharply intelligent. Her exuberance and frankness disarms one and we became good friends after a two hour chat.

Malcolm McDonald had introduced her to Nehru, Dr. Radhakrishnan, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur and others. She had many friends like P.N. Sharma, the late well known photographer and Mulk Raj Anand, not surprising, because of her very friendly attitude and a pleasing knack of probing. "I am fascinated by India, it has also come as a cultural shock the diversity the scenic beauty and the caste system on one side, the westernization, then the ancient culture so well preserved and the poverty that is so glaring. I have to come here more often," she said.

Later when she came again in 1958 she was persuaded by friends to visit Kathmandu. The visit was a turning point

in her life. She met an Indian army officer, an engineer of the Madras Sappers who was in Nepal building a road from Kathmandu to the foot hills in India. Her relationship with Col. Vincent Ratnaswamy grew close and after her divorce from Leonard Comber she married Col. Vincent in his home town Madras (now Chennai) in 1971. I met Han Suyin and Col. Vincent at the Ashoka Hotel during one of her many visits, I found her very happy. "I am in love," she said to me blushing like a teen ager. Her book *The Mountain is Young*, a novel set against the backdrop of a eleventh century conservative society in Nepal struggling towards a modern ethos, was published in 1958.

Han Suyin had finally found her soul mate in Vincent, I found her happy and relaxed; gone were the tensions and irritability. Her stay in Nepal had brought a sense of tranquility. Most of her books centred around her life, but she also has a keen insight into her surroundings which she skillfully weaves into a readable narrative.

Her interest in China and the happenings there largely rose from her Chinese ancestry and her early entangled life. She was able to go to China after a long wait and effort in 1956 to meet her father. It was the period of the Cultural Revolution and the Hundred Flowers. In her book *The Crippled Tree*, which Bertrand Russel has called 'a valuable and outstanding book', she has vividly portrayed the eventful years. Later in her many visits to China she was able to meet and develop friendly contacts with Chinese leaders Mao Tse Tung, Zhou Enlai, Marshal Chen Yi and leaders of the 1949-55, 1956-57 to 1960s. Including Asian leaders like Norodun Sihanouk Sukarno, Tunku Abdul Rahman and others.

Muhammad Yunus

On my way back from Bhutan I stopped over in Dacca on 9 October 1999, with the hope of being granted an interview by Hasina Sheikh the then Prime Minister of Bangladesh. I had earlier requested the Indian High Commissioner Mr Deb Mukherjee to help me. I was his house guest. The long wait turned out to be like waiting for Godot. Three days passed and the High Commissioner suggested I visit Prof. Muhammad Yunus of the Grameen Bank and some of the Rural Centres.

If there is a bright spot and great hope for the future it was evident in the imposing modern building that houses the BRAC in Mohakali. Totally dedicated to the cause of the downtrodden and the poor, Muhammad Yunus' dedication and efforts to reach out to millions of the poor Bangladeshi people. Realizing, it would make good copy, I jumped at Mr Mukherjee's suggestion.

A former lecturer at Chittagong University Prof. Yunus had left his job to find a solution of narrowing the distance 'between the real life of the poor and hungry and the abstract world of economic theory.'

"How did you start this huge mind-boggling plan of micro-credit, an uphill and risk laden task?" I asked when I met this scholarly and lively professor in his neat and well designed office that morning.

"Anyone in my place who has been touched by their conditions would have done the same," he said charitably.

"No, not so, they would have only exploited," I replied to provoke.

A wan smile appeared, "I was shocked to see how the poor are suffering in a village nearby Johra all they needed is a small amount to set up a small income coming venture just about 300 to 400 rupees while governments talk in terms of millions. A money lender would have harassed them, I decided to lend about forty people a small sum each and watch, would you believe it if I say that in a years time the money was returned to me and they had a regular income from their little shops or trade. I also borrowed money from banks to give it to the needy. All of them paid back. This was in 1976.

"After I succeeded in two villages I decided to set up a Grameen Bank in 1983 and gradually reached out to more villages. Twenty years later we had reached two billion dollars covering more than 37,000 villages out of the total 68,000 villages in Bangladesh. Out of whom 94 percent are women borrowers from the total 2.1 million we lend to," he explained adding, "creating employment alone cannot wipe out poverty, it can only be done when people are able to control their own fate."

This banker of the poor as he is known at home and abroad is a pleasant person with unusual perception. More than 40 per cent eradication of poverty in Bangladesh is the result of Grameen Bank's micro-financing system. According to current reports (source World Bank) Grameen Bank of Muhammad Yunus lends nearly 30 million dollars a month to nearly 1.8 million borrowers.

"We have now moved to group-based lending to reach out and also have accountability, where borrowers come up with mutual guarantee loans. Our loans are not large and loan cycles are short. This system largely helps women borrowers and we have had no problems in repayment of

loans. Except some times due to misfortune in the families they ask for an extension," he said.

"Most of them require only small amounts ranging from 20 to 100 dollars to buy cows, husk paddy or make pots and pans or buy sewing machines. Self employment in rural areas is the best solution. With basic education, many young people in villages have opened phone booths. A large number of villages in Bangladesh do not have electricity. Grameen Bank has provided Grameen Solar Energy to these places which could be operated by the poor," said Prof. Yunus.

"Why don't you visit and see for yourself some of our centres?" he suggested. "Good idea," was my reaction.

First I visited the Grameen Check, an enterprise of the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, producing handloom fabrics on traditional handlooms. All dyed, spun and woven and tailored by village women and men. It is export oriented and employs more than 500 people. My next visit was to the Monigong centres, a backward rural area with hardly any pucca roads. I saw women between thatched poultry sheds sitting on the ground and rendering accounts of the loans or asking for fresh loans. In this area nearly 3,000 were involved in the poultry sector, leather, carpentry and health centres all totally operated by women. Non-formal primary education is on high priority. Here too majority of workers and students were women.

"Where are the men?" I asked. A shrug was the answer. Fifty percent of the students in BRAC schools are girls. The leather and garment centres looked like a women's world. Three million households were involved in BRAC activities. More than a million children had been brought under the child care and literacy centres (by 1999).

What fascinated me was the sight of women young and old crowded around sitting on the ground around a

young woman teacher learning to read the Koran and listening to the explanation by the teacher. Questions on divorce, marriage and religious norms were aplenty which the teacher tried to explain to then in simple Bengali.

BRAC's multifaceted activities now reaches out to more than 50,000 villages with 35 million members among whom 97 percent are women. Women being the axis around which revolves the family, BRAC ventured on to develop gender perspectives, largely among the fishing community and socially deprived. "BRAC launched the Rural Development Programmes with stress on three core areas—education, health, and local development," said the adviser to BRAC and former High Commissioner in India, Faruk Choudhry.

Today in Asia, there is no better person than Prof Yunus who has done so much for the poor in his own country. He was recently awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 2006 for his pioneering work of micro-credit to make the destitute into entrepreneurs.

"Eliminating poverty from the world is a matter of will. Don't offer charity to the poor. Charity cannot be a means to avoid the problem. It is no solution. It only perpetuates poverty by taking away the initiative from the poor," said the 65-year-old Nobel Peace Prize winner. Even at this proud moment his mind is active on how he would use the Prize money for the uplift of the poor. The 1.4 million dollars would be utilised to build a eye hospital for the poor, and set up a low-cost high nutrition food for the poor.

Muhammad Yunus the former professor and pioneer of the microcredit system and 2006 Nobel Prize winner is a man with a mission on a one track rail who has won world recognition in his goal to eliminate hunger and poverty in his country.

Sirimavo Bandaranaike

I met the lady from Sri Lanka in 1961 at the residence of Prime Minister Nehru on 28 January, she was his house guest. She had come mainly to lay the foundation stone of the new High Commission building and attend Buddhist ceremonies. She had just returned after a visit to the Vihara and a lunch hosted by President Rajendra Prasad.

A gracious and distinguished woman Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike's visit was a private one but she was given a state guest welcome being the first woman Prime Minister of a neighbouring country. She was also very much respected and loved by the Nehru family. Mrs Bandaranaike was elected to the Sri Lanka parliament after the death of her husband – the former Prime Minister Mr SWRD Bandaranaike – contesting the seat held by her late husband, as parliament was dissolved before elections were held. Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike became President of the Sri Lankan Freedom Party. She won the election in 1960.

Mrs Bandaranaike was a popular figure in Colombo for her social work activities like the Lanka Mahila Samiti and the Sinhala Institute of Culture. Her tours with her husband in Europe, USA and many Asian countries gave her some experience of the political scene. She told me during our chat that she was visiting India on a pilgrimage. "My intention was to keep my visit a private one as a holiday. I am touched by the warmth and friendliness shown to me and my children. I will try my best to

strengthen our relation and ties between our countries," she said.

Of the places she visited, she said: "I have visited places of interest and sites associate with the Buddha and am all admiration for the wonderful way these places are being maintained. The Ceylon government will certainly consider if necessary help in maintaining Buddhist institutions in India. I wish more scholars come to Ceylon to study Sinhalese scriptures and visit Buddhist sites."

Continuing she said, "our countries have close and age-long ties. India has given us our greatest treasure, Buddhism, the treasure which we have so zealously guarded and cherished, the radiant of which now emanates from our little island home."

Turning to politics, Mrs Bandaranaike said, "there is one particular problem between the two countries that has caused considerable difficulty. It is a human problem. However, I am confident that with the statesmanship of our great Prime Minister and our common desire to settle this problem an early solution will be found. The Ceylon government will do all in their power to strengthen friendship between our countries."

I met her again on 23 July 1980 on her second visit. There was a touch of optimism and calm courage in her considering that she was a harassed person with a Commission of Enquiry breathing down her back.

"The commission was appointed mainly to eliminate all opponents of the United National Party (UNP) and its reactionary policy was aimed at creating a one-party state by disqualifying all effective political challenges; work of investigation was done by lawyers with strong political ties with the UNP, it was a extravaganza of political propaganda similar to what happened here against Mrs. Indira Gandhi."

"There were two compelling reasons that brought me here, just as my visit is a 'private' one, the reasons are also private, the first reason was to share with Mrs. Indira Gandhi her grief at the loss of her son Sanjay Gandhi, although I had sent my son to the funeral. I had to come as a mother to give comfort to another mother. Secondly, to derive a little of that strength and courage that makes Mrs. Gandhi keep her head high during all calamities and personal loss."

"Of course we discussed many things especially about the commission appointed against me she was concerned as she herself went through it all and not so long ago, she is a real friend in time of need, and this is a time she needs a friend and so I came to meet her. Outwardly she has recovered, she has a lot of inner strength in her," said Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike with admiration in her voice.

About her impression of her visit here she says, "I have not been here for a couple of years. I did not want to come when Mrs. Gandhi was out of power, somehow I cannot think of India without Mrs. Gandhi as Prime Minister. We have come to associate the Nehru family as part of India. I have always come and seen India under a Nehru-era and what I now see here does not seem far different from what has been before except that you have made great deal of progress."

"How do you find Indo-Sri Lanka relations? Do you find much cooperation especially in the economic fields?"

"I do not find any love-hate atmosphere neither do I feel it has progressed much, it could be definitely better," was her reply. "Feelings about India in Sri Lanka is mixed. The present Government in Sri Lanka was close to Morarji Desai's Government – he had established a rapport with our President, Mr. Jayewardene, who has termed Mrs. Gandhi's return as a 'dark era' for India. There is a lot of

misunderstanding which has to be cleared. At the same time a good section of Sri Lankans have great admiration for Mrs. Gandhi – you should have seen the jubilation, the fire crackers that were exploded when she won the Chickmagalur by-election.”

“How about the Sirimavo-Shastri pact?”

“The agreement is going slow. There is a lot of pressure on the government not to implement it from vested interests. Nearly 300,000 Indians have left and another 300,000 were given citizenship. Progress is slow. This is being done with an eye on the presidential elections – Mr. Thondaman and others are behind it.”

“When will Sri Lanka hold elections and what are the prospects of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party?”

“Elections have been scheduled for 1983, but the Government is so unpopular that it may be earlier, it is three years now and what have they done for the people. There is a shortage of everything; unemployment is increasing, inflation is 40 percent and prices are rising daily. It is coming to a point where life is becoming impossible. My Government had introduced subsidies for the poor, the present government has removed all subsidies on food, etc. The press has been stifled and now they have declared an Emergency because the workers are on strike. When the railway workers went on strike during our regime we did not take such measures. They have sacked all the workers and are employing new raw hands like train and truck drivers from similar other jobs, where only skilled workers can do the job. Train and truck accidents have become so common, as a result. The strike was justified. How long will this government last,” she questions with vehemence.

“What is the future of your party and do you hope to come back as Prime Minister?”

After a thoughtful pause she says, “you see it is not

like India, our Constitution is different, you have a more democratic system. Our election system is different. After our defeat the party was demoralized. We lost because our organisation was weak. Now our party has a new constitution and we have started to rebuild from grass roots level and is now geared to the new system of election. As for coming back as Prime Minister let our party win first then the party will decide." Warming to the subject she adds, "we have a one-party Government, they have changed the Constitution to consolidate the position of the President; they have done away with by-elections, only party nominee will fill a vacant seat. All the rich, the capitalists have bought over the MPs. You never hear a single voice of dissent in Parliament, they do not even sit through the sessions – just five minutes presence in Parliament – and they are entitled to Rs. 200 per day with all extras they get Rs. 3000 a month, this includes a driver, a secretary, office facilities and car. Why should they bother, they are happy. The Government has no programme, no policy. What was the need for an emergency now? The Government is heading for disaster."

How does it feel to be out of power and what is your mission in life?

"Well both has its charms and its advantages, hasn't it? I feel more free now and am able to meet the common people and get closer to them whom I could not meet before and I am happy I followed my husband's ideals. I have that satisfaction. I enjoyed being in opposition. There was no dictator then the situation changed and we were heckled, booed and shouted down. It was very embarrassing, now they have quietened down. As to my mission – Party work, reorganize the party and the youth wing," she points out.

Mrs. Bandaranaike who met members of Parliament,

mainly the new young MPs, says, she was impressed with them and advised them not to lose sight of Sanjay's dream of a better world for the poor.

"I was very surprised at the warmth of your hospitality and the excellent programme arranged for me. I did not expect this as I had said I was coming only on a private visit, I am happy to be here once again and it was a very useful visit," she said.

Zia-ur-Rahman

President Zia-ur-Rahman of Bangladesh seems to have been a familiar figure in Delhi circles. It was obvious that he had goodwill for India. During his last visit in September of 1980 I met him for a brief question answer session.

Bangladesh President Zia-ur-Rahman told *National Herald** on Friday that India and Bangladesh had no such problems as two friends like us could not solve, "If there is a feeling that we are not responding to India's overtures it is not true. Given the goodwill on both sides every problem can be sorted out. Solutions to some problems may have delayed but both sides have realised mutual difficulties and as problems have their solutions, we should try to get them solved."

On the issue of illegal immigration:

"There is no such immigration. No such thing. There are forces from your side and from our side. They look after it. Recently there was a meeting of the two sides to review the situation."

"Not much trade traffic seems to have been generated. Neither there is a flow of cultural exchanges?"

"That again is a misapprehension. Trade has increased. There is an adverse balance and we must correct this. The trade from our side must be increased. We hope to make

* This writer was working as Correspondent-Columnist for *National Herald*.

more exports to India. As for the cultural scene, we have just signed a cultural cooperation pact. This should bring a closer understanding for fostering relations between our countries. I am sure that in the near future you will not have much to complain about."

Mr. Ziaur Rahman said that he was very much impressed with the writings in the Indian press, especially the understanding and goodwill they have shown. He wanted more newsmen to visit Bangladesh and see for themselves how the country has progressed since independence.

"You have visited India a number of times. These visits must have created some impression on you. What is it that you will cherish on your return home?"

"A feeling of goodwill for the people of India. A better understanding of their problems and feeling that India and Bangladesh must meet and talk more to each other. This will help towards achieving a better understanding and expand our relationship. May I, through National Herald express my thanks for the hospitality of your people and extend goodwill on behalf of the people of my country for the people of India – I wish them prosperity and all the best."

"On your talks with Mrs. Gandhi?"

"Apart from discussing the regional waters conference, the Ganga waters issue was also discussed. Our discussions were interesting. We hope good things will come out of our discussion on a long term basis and there should be a follow-up on this. In this way cooperation will be increased," he said. "We also discussed availability of fertilizer and the question of supplying it at cheaper price especially to poor countries, like ours."

On opposition to selling Bangladesh gas to India, he replied: "As far as I know we will sell gas if India needs it."

"Did you invite Mrs. Gandhi to Bangladesh?"

"Yes I did. Not only this time, but also the last time I was here. We hope she would visit Bangladesh soon."

"Is your country influenced by any outside powers, like Pakistan?"

"No. Why should it? We are an independent, sovereign nation."

On regional cooperation, Zia-ur-Rahman said, "It is most unfortunate that we know so little about our own specific capabilities in the region which could be profitably harnessed for our collective benefit. Regional cooperation will immediately yield profitable results. This regional meeting is useful for exchanging ideas," he said conveying a positive attitude towards bilateral relations.

Junius Richard Jayewardene

President of Sri Lanka, Mr. J.R. Jayewardene was in New Delhi in 1993 on May 1st and 2nd to attend the conference on building a Just, Peaceful, Nuclear Weapon-free and Non-violent World Order organised by the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation.

"I have myself been a firm believer of non-violence, 'Ahimsa', from the time in 1930s, when under the influence and leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, the great movement for freedom, based on Ahimsa and Satyagraha, flourished in India," he said.

Since Sri Lanka attained freedom in 1948 Mr. Jayewardene has been pleading for Ahimsa. At the Japanese Peace Treaty Conference held in San Francisco, USA, in September 1951 he cited the Lord Buddha's words—"hatred ceases not by hatred but by love". At every international conferences be it the Commonwealth Summit, the SAARC or UN or NAM his favourite theme was non-violence. "Give up arms not only nuclear weapons and we should talk of non-violence not only in church, mosque and temple but at summit conferences also." He was one of the staunchest supporters of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's Action Plan on Disarmament.

Mr. J.R. Jayewardene became Prime Minister of Sri Lanka in 1977. He was 71 years old. His United National Party got a thundering majority at the elections defeating Mrs. Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka Freedom Party.

When you have been in politics for 40 years you can afford to be curt, matter of fact and evasive. This is the impression I got after a brief question-answer session with the Sri Lankan President Mr. Jayewardene. After an interview with him one is left with the impression that he is more of a diplomat than a politician—perhaps a good combination of the two. When he wants he can also be charming.

Mr. Jayewardene was of the view that a meeting like the Commonwealth Conference has its uses. "One comes to know something of the new countries and their needs. Apart from expressing our views on many matters we devoted some attention to those regions of the Pacific. We should think of them too."

On protectionism—"Generally there need be no protectionism between ourselves nor against the others around us but the developing countries have to protect themselves."

Mr. Jayewardene said that the proposal of Indian Ocean as an area of peace was first mooted by Sri Lanka. "Now it has become part of international politics and everybody agrees that there is value in the proposal. Leave the Indian Ocean free is what I say."

On relations with India: "We are best friends".

"But it is being said that you were closer to the Janata government?"

"As they were in the government that time we worked with them. But we have friends outside the office too. Apart from personal friendship, no government can dare to help the opposition. My government is very friendly with the present government, we have very good relations. Isn't India the fifth largest trade partner of Sri Lanka?" was his response to the question.

On certain remarks made by Mrs. Bandaranaike

during her visit here about his government, Mr. Jayewardene remarked: "It is not correct that any person should go abroad and criticize his or her country. Anything said within your country among your own people cannot be stopped in a democracy."

Is he hopeful of being elected President again?

"Depends on my health and the Party. In the four decades of my political career I have achieved something for my country: the Colombo Plan, the Japanese Peace Treaty, our Constitution and lastly our development programmes which I think is unprecedented in its scope."

Mr. Jayewardene admitted that there is 25 per cent unemployment and a trade deficit of 400 million. We know we have many problems and we are tackling these in our own way. Inflation cannot be tackled by reducing unemployment. We have started an intensive Family Planning Campaign. Our free trade zone is doing better than we expected. A hundred industries have been set up around it. We want to import heavy machinery and other goods; hence we have to borrow money from outside. Things are not so bad as they are painted out to be," he tried to explain.

His wife who was present shied away from questions. "On principle I do not give interviews to the press," she said.

Daw Khin Kyi & Aung San Suu Kyi

1960 was one of those periods India was riding high with green pastures and sunny skies all around. Foreign VIP's were swarming with goodwill and friendship. Prime Minister Nehru, India's first Prime Minister was the gracious host. The world's best diplomats were posted to India. Among the ambassadors were two well known and highly respected ladies representing their countries. Both were remarkable women in their own different status. Both received special attention from the government and the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

Mrs Alva Myrdal and Maha Thiri Thudhamma Daw Khin Kyi were the most popular ladies of the day. They represented their country with dignity, grace and built friendship between India and their countries. Daw Khin Kyi was a pleasant, friendly and warmhearted matronly figure in diplomatic circles. She was the wife of the late General Aung San, patriot, revolutionary and Prime Minister of Burma, who was assassinated on 19 July 1947. He was leader of the Burma Independence Movement. After the death of her husband, Madam Daw Khin took up social work and later became Director of the social work department.

Prime Minister U Nu, a friend of India, appointed Madam Khin Kyi as ambassador to India. Nehru was a friend of U Nu and was delighted to meet Madame in Delhi. He had met her before and knew her well. For seven

years Daw Khin Kyi was active in creating good will, affection and understanding in official and social circles. In an unassuming way she did a good deal of social work without stepping on toes. Seeing the dilapidated condition of the Buddhist Centre in Mehrauli she enlisted the support of the Indian Buddhist community and others to rebuild the Centre. Many Buddhist functions were organized under her guidance.

As an experienced social worker she was head of many organizations; for example, Social Planning Commission, Burmese Council of Social Services, National Council of Maternity and Social Welfare, Ramakrishna Hospital & Library, etc. in Rangoon. She had been awarded the title Mahathiri Thudhamma in 1953, The Yugoslav Star and the Noble Order of the Crown of Thailand, and yet she remained a humble, kind and motherly image to all.

"I will try my very best to devote as much time as possible to social work while I am here in India, my heart is with my sisters, I must consult Panditji how I could be useful," was her reply to a question on her activities.

One thing that was remarkable was her naïve child-like approach and confidence towards Pandit Nehru. He was her guiding light for everything official or personal even to small domestic matters like a leaking roof she would go to him for advise. It was Panditji, Panditji every time she needed advice and help. Intelligent she was a loveable guileless woman, a mother, friend, sister all rolled into a warm personality.

Mother of three, two sons and a daughter (her second son died in an accident at a very young age). Her daughter Suu Kyi was a sprightly pig-tailed thin girl of fifteen those days. Shy but curious, after her mother's appointment by Prime Minister U Nu, Suu Kyi studied at Jesus and Mary Convent. Later graduated from Lady Shri Ram College,

Delhi. Mother Daw Khin Kyi had a strong influence in her growing up days. Burmese moral values, social and cultural norms, courtesy and deference to elders and Buddhist values had been impressed upon her. Her school and college education and activities were under the strict regimen of her mother. She was also made aware of her father's heritage and his commitment to his country. A cheerful girl she made many friends among them were Rajiv and Sanjay, Prime Minister Nehru's grandsons. A voracious reader, one always found her with a book in hand except when she was at the President's Body Guard ground for her riding lessons.

Later after graduating from Oxford University she did a post-graduate course from New York University and later took up a job at the UN Advisory Committee on Administration and Budgetary Questions. She married Michael Aris, a British, who was Visiting Professor at Harvard and Tibetologist. Later they both worked in Bhutan. Until 1988 she was busy with domestic responsibilities raising her two sons in London. She returned to Burma when her mother fell seriously ill, who died in March 1988. By then Burma was in the throes of a political upheaval and mass uprising. Being the daughter of General Aung Sun, architect of independent Burma, and having inherited the values of nationalism and democratic norms from her father, Suu Kyi was inextricably drawn to the independence movement. Her popularity brought her under house arrest in July 1989 when she formed the National League for Democracy and restoration of human rights. Even her children and husband were refused permission to meet her.

The State Law and Order Restoration Council, SLORC, the current political party in Burma has refused all international agencies' request for her release. Although

her party the National League for Democracy had won a colossal electoral victory in May 1990 the military Junta refused to consider transfer of power to her party and brought a stricter imposition of House arrest that when her husband died in England she was even refused permission to attend his funeral.

In 1990 Suu Kyi was awarded the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, in 1991 she received the Nobel Peace Prize for her 'unflagging efforts for people throughout the world who are striving to attain democracy, human rights and ethnical, conciliation by peaceful means'.

"She is an outstanding example of the power of the powerless," said Vaclav Havel who nominated her for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Who would have thought or dreamt, that this teen age girl with pig-tails and a shy smile would be 'Burma's Woman of Destiny'. Now past 60 years old she needs medical attention and care, not isolation.

Aung San Suu Kyi has been under detention by Myanmar's Junta leader General Than Shwe for the last 17 years of which ten years she has spent under house arrest. She was not even allowed to visit her sick husband or attend his funeral. Neither is she allowed to meet visitors. The United States and the UN have failed in their efforts. The US has also imposed economic sanctions against the Junta regime. Nothing deters the military dictatorship as they are afraid once Suu Kyi is free her supporters and the popular NLD would throw the ruling dictatorship out.

Richard Buckminster Fuller

Dr. Richard Buckminster Fuller was born on 12 May, 1895. He was a distinguished engineer, mathematician, inventor, designer, mechanic, writer and philosopher.

His basic premise was maximum gain advantage from the minimum energy output. He was widely known for his designs of the Geodesic domes and Dymaxion houses. His mathematic formula for the geodesic dome is reported to apply perfectly to the structure of the protein shell that surrounds every known virus.

He was convinced that the population explosion and mankind's inner antagonism foretell a possible new deluge and that time is running out for humanity, he therefore proposed a worldwide technological revolution led by 'Comprehensive designers'; who would coordinate resources and technology on a world scale and prepare an inventory of the globe's resources presently preoccupied in serving 44 per cent of humanity but are adequate to support 100 per cent of a multiplying human race.

His publications include: *4-D Timeclock* (1927), *Nine Chains to the Moon* (1938), *Education Automation* (1963), *No More Second Hand God* (1963), *Ideas and Integrity* (1963), *The Unfinished Epic of Industrialisation* (1963).

The master builder of homes and planes is a builder of ideas that really can move and transform mountains of material to give man the happy life earth was designed to yield.

Time stands still and a great sense of great distance emerges as one listens to the rapid flow of words that come from the "greatest living genius in industrial technical realization in building" Mr. Richard Buckminster Fuller. He can hold his listeners in awed silence.

Buckminster Fuller is made of the mould that produced an Edison. He is a technological avatar who once made a bargain with himself "to discover the principles operative in the universe and turn them over to my fellow men."

The man who revolutionized the building industry is famous for his homes that fly, the Dymaxion automobile, igloo and world map, bathrooms without water and for things called 'Octet trusses,' 'synergetics and tensegrity' and best of all the Geodesic Dome which hit the headlines at the Expo '67 in New York.

The famed Geodesic Domes is used widely in the United States and many other countries. Soviet Premier Khrushchev once invited Fuller to Russia to teach their engineers. Made of anything and everything, polyester, fibre, glass, alloy Aluminium, weatherproof cardboard, plastic, bamboo – they are cheap to make and can be lifted by helicopter and require no columns for support.

Roofs over cities is the answer to modern age, says inventor Fuller. The captive atmosphere under the Domes is enough to support the structural shell, like a large pneumatic tyres, says Fuller.

Bucky as he is popularly called is a charismatic man. Even in his young days when misfortune and bad luck were his constant companions he was fifty years ahead of time in his ideas and "today I have realised most of my dreams as to what humanity needs and how the world must look in the future – but there is a great deal more to be done, what is achieved today is not good for tomorrow;

man is stuck in the traditional moulds of thinking; he must move forward" he says emphasizing his impatience with a nervous flurry of his hands and his hazel eyes staring through thick lenses.

His formula for designs is to make more intelligent use of the resources the earth has to offer. "The earth was perfectly designed for human life" as three quarters of the planet earth is water, the man is now treading swiftly to occupy the world's waters and why not? he once asked and designed service stations anchored to the sea bottom for submarines to nestle up to. Autos will soon become fossils "we will put jet wings on our backs and fly out through the window on high frequency beams" says Bucky Fuller.

His tensegrity built on the conception that compression and tension factors can be separated in any structure if combined with the frame of tetrahedron – octahedron combinations could bridge the Grand Canyon itself. But this invention like some of his other ones remain cult items. "I don't care, I just invent then wait until a man comes around to needing them," he says and waves aside all talk of his past inventions "let us talk of tomorrow," he says bouncing like a schoolboy in his chair as we sat talking in his hotel room in New Delhi.

And his latest pet project is World Man. "All the resources man needs is in India, one sixth of humanity lives at India's door, they are going round the world claiming sovereignty – priests are claiming that God saved this and that dry land for them but in India there is no such nonsense," he claimed with vehemence. He wants India to affirm to the world that it does not claim anything that does not belong to it and wants to offer world citizenship to Man – "There will be one billion youngsters who would like to take Indian passports. India is the only country that

can create a World Man citizenship, give the young people a chance to join up the world. India's unique position and its mixed population like Mexico – the only two countries that can save humanity – new visions, new ideas with no local bias will create World man," says Bucky the philosopher.

And the spherically enclosed and domed cities with World Man living under the whole industry of the earth could be integrated in such a way to employ credit cards, computerized ticketing and automated follow-through of transportation process.

Bucky is seized these days of what he calls the "Design Revolution." "Man must use his mind. There is enough to go around for everyone," he says. The population explosion does not worry him. He has an answer for it – "there is food, houses and all material wealth on earth and the sea for man – instead of fearing automation, an entire industry, we would automate the entire industry thus freeing man for more human tasks such as thinking the whole concept of earning a living must be broken down, the free enterprisers are the pirates of industry," says Bucky. "Take away all the inventions from humanity and within six months half of us would die of starvation and disease. Take away all the politicians and all political ideologies and leave all the inventions, then more would eat and prosper than do now."

Bucky's tetrahedral cities need housing a million people; this need computerized travel facilities; so he invented the travelling cartridge or the fuselage cartridge where the traveller is transported direct to the plane at the tail of the open fuselage "like loading your luggage." At destination airport, the passenger cartridge sections would be helicopted or vacuum tube sucked to the nearest downtown disembarkation point.

Hotels, tickets, bookings, etc. will be done by vending machines or over a two-way TV facsimile, cable or radio beam closed circuit system operating from point of travel. All the nonsense of customs and immigration must stop; nothing is more barbaric than these old outmoded ways introduced by piratical rulers, says Bucky Fuller.

A man who has travelled nearly a million miles in the last ten years, says, "I am in an aircraft – all the time wasted at airports waiting for planes must be eliminated." Asked how a developing country could afford costly inventions, he with obvious annoyance replied, "I am tired of this word developing; we will put a stop to this silly talk except the industrial pirates – no one uses that word, they would like to keep half the world undeveloped."

Buckminster Fuller has offered many ideas to the Indian authorities for building modern airports – the main idea is to handle humanity in large number quickly and more efficiently, he says. He was reluctant, however, to elaborate on what the designs would be. He hopes the day will arrive when man can get to work half way around the world and be home for supper. A professor at Southern Illinois University, he gives fifty lectures a year; rest of the time he is travelling lecturing and when not lecturing, writing. Bucky's lectures run for hours; and once he has started, there is no stopping him and no one wants to stop him either, for he is so interesting and fascinating.

Bucky's experience in the two world wars helped his creative genius to explore undefined spheres. He learnt all about logistics, ballistics, navigation and naval aviation during the first war and the second found him with the Board of Economic Warfare and the Foreign Economic Administration.

During this period his 'anticipatory designs' with which he had entered the building industry, gave way to

something that could be put to immediate use. He produced the Dymaxion Development Units – large silos for storing grain. The ball of energy that is Buckminster Fuller went through a bad spell as a young man. During that period he even contemplated suicide – cut his exams mid year at Harvard, his little daughter died; he ran into large debts – all this hit him hard and he took to the bottle; but Bucky was a deeply religious man and he did a soul searching turn and came to the decision that his faith in Fullerese was stronger than “the anticipatory intellectual wisdom which we may call God” and “one belongs to the universe and all men are here for the sake of other men.”

Bucky jetted into Delhi from Israel where he was building a Geodesic Dome theatre near a Kibbutz and two days earlier he was in Oxford – London where he is designing an underground Samuel Beckett Theatre and the day before, “I was at Wisconsin University giving a poetry reading.” Critical of the development of technology and the way it is used he says this is all wrong; there is need for integrity; we use our knowledge to bomb people, kill them and make war to make money for just a few; this should stop. “All these energies can be directed to the success of man – using what the earth has to offer man can have enough for himself.”

Two years ago when asked to write a one sentence statement of his life's objectives Bucky compiled by writing a nineteen line sentence and signed with the suffix – “Aboard over 1,000 miles per minute speeding spaceship Earth within the outer reaches of the cosmically spiraling and expanding Milky Way, the Galactic Nebula.”

Boutros Ghali

The non-aligned meet held in Delhi of April 1985 was considered as historic and important, as it was a crucial moment for the National Liberation Movement in Africa to express solidarity especially for Namibia.

Spotting among the large number of members I found Boutros Ghali then Foreign Minister of Egypt, holding discussions with groups and members of SWAPO.

Accosting him I asked, "are your expectations high?"

His reply: "I believe in the principles and objectives of the movement, I find there is a lot of political will in Delhi towards reaching the objectives, it is also significant that the meeting here corresponds with the 10th anniversary of the Bandung Conference. We will use this meeting to create a new mobilization in favour of NAM. Egypt is a founder member of the Non-Aligned Movement. Vestiges of colonialism still remain. Our movement has to fight and get rid of all kinds of colonialism, we hope to take up issues like the Iran-Iraq war, the Palestinian problem and economic issues. Ours is a Movement that can diffuse the prevailing situation and improve international situation."

As an old friend of India Dr Boutros Ghali was Ambassador to India, a scholar and Foreign Minister. He was a strong adherent of the Bandung doctrine. On Indo-Egyptian relations he said, "I have brought a message from President Mubarak for Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Our relations have been good and I hope to discuss bilateral

issues with Mr Rajiv Gandhi during my stay here and reach positive conclusions." During his stay he witnessed the naming of a road in Delhi of late Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser.

Mr Boutros Ghali was Foreign Minister of the Arab Republic of Egypt for more than twelve years. A seasoned diplomat he has played an active part in the objectives of the non-aligned movement and had a hand in bringing a rapprochement with the two super powers through the 1961 born Movement, the brain child of Nehru, Nasser and Tito for a United Third World. "Today as we enter the twenty first century a new style has emerged," said Mr Boutros Ghali on a visit to India, a few years later.

"Does it mean the end of the cold war? Or will it produce a new cold war or a new entente?"

"I have to discuss the impact of changes and the position considering the basic challenges. I have to talk to the Indian government, it may be prudent that some precautions be taken towards an entente but not at the expense of North-South relations, instead we will discuss how North-South relations be brought to a better position and the South open dialogue with the North. A better synchronisation is needed. We have now problems to be tackled for instance on apartheid, Namibia, Africa Fund, post independence issues."

"The Fund question, and the infiltration of South Africa and independence of Namibia and problems of post-apartheid society will have to be brought on the NAM agenda. We have to get into the question of how the black power will deal with the white minority in South Africa," was his concerned reply in thoughtful tones.

After a meeting with the Arab Ambassadors during his visit to Delhi, he was concerned that the economic relations among Third World countries has not progressed.

"What are Egypt's plans to improve conditions?" I asked

"The Arab Gulf and the Maghreb countries have formed their own economic cooperation groups, in Egypt we are negotiating with the IMF for a way out of the foreign debt situation. Our largest asset is Tourism it brings billions annually, we are in the process of developing our tourist industry with development of Red Sea, the Mediterranean beaches attracts large number of tourists from the EEC."

Unlike many Egyptians Mr Boutrous Ghali is a man of few words. He spoke in a serious manner after much deliberation. He is a seasoned diplomat who gives away nothing and is well respected. His tenure as foreign Minister had opened doors towards bilateral relations on the economic front.

Mr Boutrous Ghali was UN Secretary general from 1990 to 1995. He is not the typical Egyptian, who is generally friendly, outspoken and enjoy social life. For instance, my friend a religious scholar and a highly respected Arabic scholar and head of Al Azhar University late Sheikh Ahmed al-Bakhuri was a delightfully warm person friendly devoid of the airs of an intellectual and his wife was equally charming concerned and affectionate. She made the best Moloqaya, a delicious soup in Cairo. Mr Boutrous Ghali perpetually wore a serious frown and an unfriendly mien.

Helvi Sipila

Mrs. Helvi Sipila former Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations, the first woman to be made an Under-Secretary by the UN body was in India for the eleventh time. "I am always happy to come to India. I would not have missed this opportunity whenever I come here to learn more about situations whether population, social welfare or status of women," said Mrs Sipila, who was on her way to an ESCAP conference. "My Indian visit and the talks I have had here makes me feel I need not go to ESCAP. I have learnt what I wanted to learn."

Mrs Helvi Sipila was Consultant-Adviser to the extended programme of Voluntary Fund for International Women's Year, a UN project. The extended programme is specially to assist women in the developing countries in the whole decade. The world plan of action adopted in Mexico was funded towards many activities. It was not intended to be a major or permanent fund.

"But we found ourselves left with more funds and no projects so it was decided to channel and assist women's programmes in developing countries. Then we found ourselves with more projects and no funds, from the two million dollars that remained from the Mexico conference we were able to give \$400000 to the Economic & Special Commission, countries in Asia, Middle East, Latin America and Africa all got enough money to implement programmes for women's welfare.

"The African countries needed strengthening their development system. Now we have at least created a system for planning regional projects towards which we have received large funds" said Mrs Helvi Sipila in an interview at the residence of Finland's Ambassador Maria Razi.

"Two big projects in Asia, Middle East, the Carribean and Africa will be launched soon. The proposals have come from regional commissions of the area. We have come to the conclusion that there should also be women components in the national and government organizations. These projects will be operated through UNDP" said Mrs. Helvi Sipila, who is intensely pursuing her mission of the uplift of women in the developing countries.

The Voluntary Fund of Decade for Women has five representatives—India, Nigeria Jamaica, East Germany and UK and meets twice a year. The last meeting was in March. Nearly 191 projects were proposed and funded. Until now thirteen and a half million dollars has been disbursed.

Mrs. Sipila is in touch with Governments, sponsors, beneficiaries and non-governmental organizations. She thinks many of the NGOs are deserving cases. They do very good work without much resources. The fund is utilized for health nutrition, education, employment, industrial and agricultural training and mass communication or any kind of action oriented research.

"All the proposals we have received are income-generating projects. Training of trainees, development, planning – we are very pleased with this programme as in no country have women, got their voices heard for development planning at village level and in some countries not even at urban level. We would like to benefit those who have never had their demands heard. Women's projects here as anywhere deserve more attention. Village women have to walk long distances to get food or water, these are

hardships that would be removed. A combined effort by governments and local councils in planning for a better life is essential" said Mrs. Sipila.

She said that the Mexico and the Copenhagen Conferences were a big success. "It was the first time in history that the women of the world were heard. They came there not as representatives of Governments but as women of the world, 80 per cent of the women gathered there were United in their demands and they made policy decisions. The two conferences made a change in the world of women. Today they have started to make and take interest in world policy."

She had a dig at the press "I never understood what the journalists present there were looking for. When everything was going well they said the conference was a failure. They were looking for confrontation, terrorism and anything sensational. The media does not seem to be interested in developments as such. They did not realize that for the first time in the history, women were trying to make their voices heard." She said excitedly, a delightful person for an interviewer.

A lawyer by profession, for 32 years she practiced law in Helsinki. She was President of the International Federation of Women Lawyers. Vice-President of the International Council of Women and Commissioner of Girl Guides. A mother of four and grand mother of six her husband was a lawyer. Her children have not taken to law. They are doctors, economists and political scientists. "The Finnish women," said Mrs Helvi Sipila, "are eagerly taking to politics. Twenty-six per cent of the members in Parliament are women and 44 per cent in the Municipal councils in Finland."

Prince Bernard

The order of the Golden Ark, a Royal Dutch environment award was presented to the Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi by the former World Wild Life Board president Prince Bernard of the Netherlands.

The award is presented to distinguished people who have made contributions to wise and sustainable use of the national resources. Prince Bernard, husband of former queen Juliana, is a well known and active person on wild life preservation. The Prince, ageing but very alert, flew into Delhi with members of the World Wild Life Board and the Netherlands Wild Life Organisation to present the award to the Prime Minister. The Prince's interest in wild life preservation and the environment is best described in his own words: "More than half of my life I have been active in wild life."

"In India the late Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi was responsible for the reforestation and saving wild life. Her Project Tiger is a tremendous success and we find her son, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, is maintaining his distinguished mother's commitment to environmental conservation," Prince Bernard said.

In an interview, Prince Bernard expressed his anxiety, hopes and a certain optimism at the situation regarding wild life in the world despite the decline of their habitat in the name of modern development. "We are 25 years too late in recognizing the need to save the wild life habitat.

We could have saved a lot of wild life if attention had been given to what is happening. In 1948 the International Union of Conservation was set up but practically no recognition was given. In 1960, the Wild Life Board was set up and a gradual awareness is growing and governments, ministers and public men are expressing concern. Any plans by a government department have to have an ecological effect," he told this writer.

Prince Bernard refers to the report of Prof. Norman Myers commissioned by the Government of Indonesia, which clearly says how to use forests wisely without destroying them. "The report," says Prince Bernard, "is applicable to all countries. The Brazilians used to destroy their forest and the wild life. Now they have a law preventing it but the law has to be implemented. Therein lies the tragedy: I doubt if the law will be enforced strictly.

"The Dutch wild life expert pointed out a large part of the forests in Burma have been destroyed, the Burmese deny this but they are lying. We have seen the destruction through satellite," he said.

"What is the solution to the problem? Can the World Life Organisation prevent this?" I asked.

"A conscience is needed, people and governments must have a conscience and a knowledge of the long-term harm to the environment and the extinction of wild life if their habitat is destroyed," he remarked with vehemence.

"For instance," says Prince Bernard, "in Thailand they are planning to build a huge dam in north-west, a most beautiful part of the country. We are hoping and praying that they won't build. I know these things are happening in India too. I am fighting against dams. The plea of modern development is bunk. I have observed a change in Africa. There is an awareness for protecting the habitat."

"Has the World Wild Life Board made an impact on the people?"

"Yes," says Prince Bernard. He said, "we have mobilized the media and there is a definite awareness now. Protests and opposition is heard from all over the world, but it does not mean we have won the battle. If the public gets to know what conservation means for the next generation, they will only vote for those who are of the same view. Our politicians and ministers are only thinking of how to get reelected. They have little commitment to the environment."

Soaking up the midday sun in the lush garden of the Netherlands ambassador's residence after a private lunch and a dance recital by Madhavi Mudgal, the Prince was in an expansive mood. "Thirty thousand valuable plants have been destroyed which could have been saved for its international value and benefits. The knowledge that the South American Indians and the Africans have about them, which the white men does not know is now destroyed forever. The threat to the habitat is growing particularly in the forest slopes," said Prince Bernard.

He said that to protect the habitats there should be education of the people especially the children and the decision makers. He has high praise for Prince Charles of Britain who had criticized the British Government of not doing anything about the environment and wild life. In his country the media is extensively used to create awareness.

Julius Chan

It was the year 1980, month of September—I was at my wits end chasing a galaxy of the famed, the great and the wise who had congregated around the high table for the Regional Commonwealth Meet, CHOGRM II. Heads of 16 commonwealth countries including newly independent ones like Solomon Islands, were present in full force. To break the tedium there was glamour galore with wives of the mighty and mightier lending an aura of gaiety to the tedious corollaries of a high level conference. I espied old friends like Sridath Ramphal and got in touch with the new. Soon after Mrs Indira Gandhi's remarks at the opening (as India's PM she was leader of the Indian delegation) against protectionism by advanced countries in International trade, the meeting got off to a lively start.

From among the delegates from the 16 countries I decided to have a face to face with a half Chinese half African young looking Prime Minister from Papua New Guinea, a newly independent country. Sir Julius Chan who became Prime Minister about six months ago was a former Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister. A country of just three million people, he, it is said, was a popular figure in his tiny country for having introduced reforms after it became independent in 1975.

Forty year old Sir Julius Chan (his father was Chinese) gave me the impression that he had an ambitious development and fiscal programme for his country. "I am

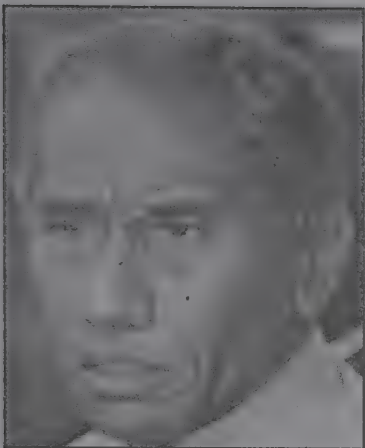
determined. I am an optimist and I know it will pull together with the six different parties in my cabinet," said the youthful looking Prime Minister to my question that his coalition government is rumoured to be shaky. Pull together he did with his friendly approach to his coalition partners and his own popularity.

"Our relations with our former colonial rulers are unique. It is a most unusual relationship, Australia is our biggest aid giver" said Sir Julius. Mild mannered he had a frank way of speaking out, "I am a non-academic man and have been a white collar, a blue collar and no-caller worker" he said with pride in his voice. He has worked at the docks carrying load and in a government office before finally joining politics, "this closeness to the people has given me an in-sight to human nature." A leader of the People's Progressive Party, Sir Chan held the portfolio of finance but later resigned on a difference of opinion. But was soon knighted by the government.

A country rich in natural wealth with 20 people to a quarter mile Papua New Guinea has rich deposits of copper and gold. An agricultural country, coffee, tea, copra, cocoa and fish are its export wealth. GNP stands at 10.9 billion, with a per capita income of 400 Kena (one kena is equalent to Rs 10). Believe it or not, Papua New Guinea has 716 dialects and three official languages: English, Pidgeon, and Motu. English is the legal language. Literacy is 30 per cent.

"What are your plans to improve and modernize to meet the needs of the future?" I raised the question.

"We are trying to open more schools at present, industrialization can wait, a few small-scale industries may be set up, our economy is based on an infrastructure which has established a reasonable credibility with international economic institutions. Our country is open to investors who are willing to set up private enterprises, our priorities are

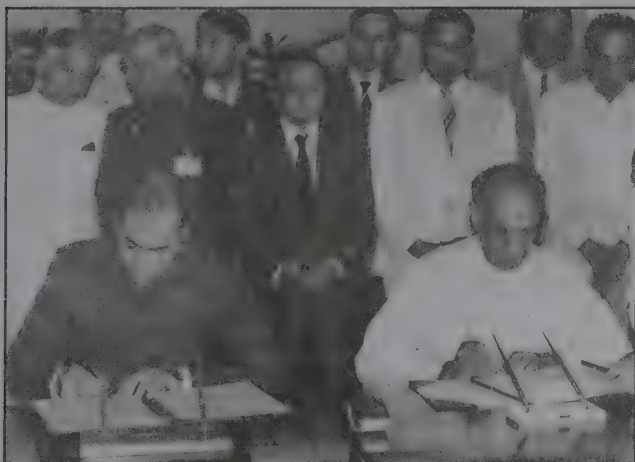


Julius Chan

Agatha Christie



Junius Richard Jayewardene
with Rajiv Gandhi



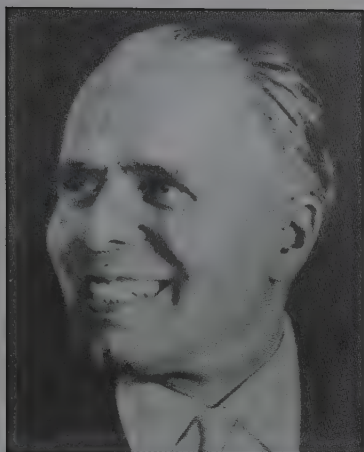
Amadou Mahtar M'Bow



Daw Khin Kyi

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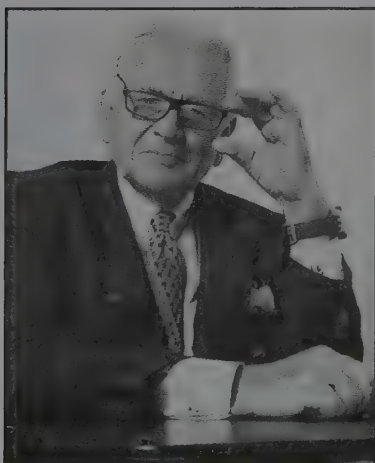




Habib Bourguiba Jr.



Germain Krull



Pierre Cardin



Boutros Ghali with Mother Teresa



Richard Buckminster Fuller with the author

to put more emphasis on rural welfare, health, education and housing along with improvement in public services. Papua New Guinea has rich timber lands but forest destruction is causing a good deal of loss in revenue. Australian aid forms one third of the budget spendings," promptly came the reply.

"A few Indians have made that country their home, they are mainly in small trade," added Sir Julius Chan, "although they are not citizens they have been there for centuries. However, Indian teachers and other experts are also there under the Colombo and Commonwealth Plans."

"Are you planning any economic tie up with India?"

"We have some mutual contacts with India for developing our sericulture, an Indian private entrepreneur is going to set up a silk spinning mill, a delegation from India had visited our country sometime ago to explore possibilities of setting up sericulture projects."

"What did you discuss with Mrs Indira Gandhi when you called on her?" I asked.

"It was a courtesy call we did discuss matters of common interest like foreign policy, Afghanistan West Asia and the Socialist bloc. We can learn a lot from you. India has a wealth of experience, informal exchanges on different matters can teach us a lot" was his reply.

On the current conference being held he was frank—"I do not know much about it, I am attending it for the first time. These regional meetings I suppose fill a communication gap, get together is good. A family that plays together stays together. To me, personally this is a good experience. I am happy to be in India, the environment here is similar to that at home, I have an admiration for the Indian people." said Sir Julian Chan his somber look melting into cheerful one as some delegates walked in to say hello.

Agatha Christie

"I do not want publicity – I am here as a wife. My husband, Mr. Mallowan, has come to attend the Archaeological Conference here," said the voice over the telephone one night when at last I managed to reach her. The voice belonged to the famous writer of detective thrillers Agatha Christie.

The mystery writer had herself been acting mysterious. The last few weeks – newsmen said, they had seen her in town, friends denied, hotel receptionists agreed and disagreed, confusing enquiries. Speculation about her being in the capital at last was settled and Agatha Christie in person agreed, she has been in India since October 1. She came with her husband to Delhi and left the next day for Kashmir for a holiday. Returning to Delhi early in November, Agatha and her husband flew to Tehran. During one of her "mystery" visits to Delhi, she learnt that her play "The Mousetrap" was being staged and she was among the audience that night witnessing the British High Commission Amateur Dramatic Club acting her characters.

With a great deal of coaxing I at last got her to agree to meet me for this magazine. Author of three score best sellers and creator of M. Poirot and Miss Marple, Agatha Christie confessed it was her third visit to India.

"India has a peculiar charm for me – not for choosing murder plots," she said, "the Indian women, in a Sari, is the most beautiful in the world. It is impossible for any

man not to be infatuated with an Indian beauty."

Ranking fourth in the world among the most-translated fiction writers, she started her writing career in her teens with poems and short stories. Her first murder story "The Mysterious Affair at Styles" was written at the age of 18. "Those were the days when I used to rewrite a great deal. Writing comes a lot easier now," she said.

"Do you plan your 'murders' beforehand?" I asked, to which came the answer: "Yes, I usually plan my story before I start writing."

About her characters, Agatha Christie said they were entirely from imagination. "Hercule Poirot was moulded from imagination and fashioned after European refugees."

Another creation out of her imagination will soon be in print – *Pale Horse*. It has the English countryside for background.

Agatha firmly believes that perfect crime is possible. "How many cases of crime go undetected? And so many murderers are at large. Isn't it because the crime was perfectly committed?" she asks.

"With the advance of modern science, the technique of crime has also reached perfection." Crime, she thinks, is an inherent mental condition. Sexual perversity is not a criminal characteristic, but can be a predisposition to crime.

To the question why she writes only detective thrillers, Agatha Christie says: "I like detective writing because I have been successful in this sphere – and the sale of my books goes up every year. Therefore, I have every reason to stick to it," she said with a smile.

Modern literature always has a place for thrillers. It provides relaxation for every one, she thinks.

It takes Agatha Christie about three to nine months to finish a novel and her plots are always laid in familiar surroundings. "Will India supply you with a plot?" I asked

her. Laughing, she answered: "I do not think so. Your country is much too nice to lay any murder plots. Since tracing of murder involves elaborate detective methods, it is easier to have the crime committed in a familiar land where you know the rules of the game."

Charming and humorous, Agatha Christie or Mrs. Mallowan was a much sought after person in the capital during her stay here. Autograph hunters and cameramen chased her everywhere. According to Agatha Christie, "An Archeologist is the best husband any woman can have. The older she gets, the more interested he is in her."

Habib Bourguiba Jr.

Suave, urbane and friendly, Tunisia's Foreign Minister, Mr. Habib Bourguiba Jr., has in abundance the qualities which enable one to win friends and influence people.

With a broad forehead beaming intelligence and a flashing smile lighting up his face, Mr. Bourguiba has the knack of setting people at ease in any circumstances. This is obviously the reason for his immense popularity back home.

A few minutes of conversation with him leaves one impressed by his honesty and his intelligent approach to problems. He symbolizes the emerging nation's aspirations to stand on their feet with pride and honour.

This reporter had been warned by his Protocol Officer of the Foreign Ministry not to take more than ten minutes of his time. But Mr. Bourguiba was in no hurry. He was relaxed and started answering questions. The Protocol Officer was getting fidgety and frequently looked at his watch. Noticing this Mr. Bourguiba turned to him and smilingly said, "This is the reason why people get dismissed and one has been dismissed for something less." Laughing he turned towards this reporter with a twinkle in his eye, "Don't worry, he will keep looking at his watch. It is a habit with him."

With that reassurance this reporter settled for a friendly interview with a world statesman.

Asked why Tunisia had not opened a mission in Delhi,

he replied: "For more reason than one. We did not want a mundane social representation as there is not much to represent and Tunisia has neither the financial nor the human resources to open prestige missions all over the world. We are more than aware of the importance of India and we have fairly good relations although the Suez issue has upset this a little." On a serious note, he added "The Suez closure is a serious obstacle and we should make an effort to find an imaginative alternative soon. The closure has become a very expensive business for all."

Referring to Tunisia's trade ties with India, he said: "We are trying for a more intensified volume of trade. Cooperation should not be just a polite term," said Mr. Habib Bourguiba, "it has to be of mutual and practical advantage. We would like to buy more from and sell more to India."

Tunisia has a population of 4.7 million and their gem of pride is the advancement Tunisia has made in the field of education since independence. Ten years ago there were 200,000 children in schools and now there are 1,150,000 which means that one out of every four Tunisian is a student. Adult literacy centers are scattered all over the country and 300,000 adults attend the centers daily.

Tunisia is a country of young people, 66 percent of the population is under 50, and 55 percent under 20. The birth rate is 2.7 which has started worrying the authorities. In the last five years, under a Ford Foundation project a birth control programme was started. "We do not want to make much noise about it," says Mr. Bourguiba.

The National Union of Women of Tunisia has kept its support in educating people on the advantages of a small and healthy family. The stress is on family health.

After independence, women in Tunisia have come into their own. They earned this with their active participation

in the independence struggle. Under a revolutionary Reform Code passed in 1967 they have full franchise and polygamy has been totally banned. "In the last elections to the Municipal Councils the majority of candidates were women, now they dominate all spheres of our life," said Mr. Bourguiba with a mischievous smile.

"Do you think women should have more right than men?" He asked in a disarming way, when he was told that this reporter belonged to a matriarchal society and yet did not agree that women should have more rights than men. It obviously pleased him.

Mr. Bourguiba has the advantage of having been a diplomat and a politician before taking up his new job. He has a progressive outlook. He would not only like to forge cultural links with other Muslim countries but with other countries too, particularly India.

A training in law and a number of diplomatic assignments abroad have given him a widespread perspective of men and matters. A realist he cannot be swayed by religion or parochial interest. Son of the President of Tunisia, Bourguiba is a member of the Assembly. Apart from Arabic and French he speaks German, Italian and English. He is the recipient of the Grand Cordon de Forde de' Independence et. de la Republique.

Soon after Tunisia opened a diplomatic mission in Delhi.

Amadou Mahtar M'Bow

Mr. Amadou Mahtar M'Bow was UNESCO's better known and able Director General from 1970-1985. The former Senegal born educationist and freedom fighter was his country's Minister for education and culture. He was a close associate of Leopold Senghor, Senegal's President. M'Bow had the distinction of having been the only black African secondary school teacher with the French colonial government in Dakar. A Youth leader in his student days at the Sorbonne he later became President of the Federation of Black Africa Student's Forum in 1950. He led his country's delegation to UNESCO and in 1970 was appointed Assistant Director General of UNESCO. In 1974, he took over as Director General. Amadou Mahtar M'Bow was married to Tahitian born Rajmonde former student of Sorbonne who later taught History and Geography at Dakar University. She was a keen student of European history and culture.

Mr. A.M. M'Bow was deeply involved in promoting literacy in the third world and was keen that India play a part and be an example for other developing countries. His interest in spreading literacy in the developing world had often led to friction between him and the developed countries largely the USA, a psychological war between the Director General and bodies like UNCTAD and GATT. The US launched an attack on him for leaning towards the Third World. The Americans threatened to withdraw from

UNESCO. Defending himself he justified his actions saying 'UNESCO is the victim of distortion of facts, deliberate omissions and of intentions attributed to it.'

Many attributed the bashing of the UNESCO DG by the white countries as he was a black from a developing country and has had a distinguished career. Although he was admired by all the developing countries there were some who felt that he was pro-western and possibly a leftist.

Dr. Amadou Mahtar M'Bow was a friend of the Third World and a close friend of India, he felt that India could play a more active role among the developing countries. He had a good understanding with the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi – on the question of illiteracy and development aid to the developing countries.

In August 1980 Amadou M. M'Bow was in India at the invitation of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to discuss vital problems of the international community, fields of cooperation, the new Industrial Economic Order and New Information Order.

Soon after I had an exclusive interview with the Director General Amadou M'Bow. "What did your discussions focus on?"

"I am determined to see increased cooperation between UNESCO and India. India's experience in this regard will guide other developing countries. This will enable UNESCO to strengthen relations between India and other countries. This is one of the aspects that I discussed with Mrs. Gandhi."

Continuing he said, "we also discussed other things like combating illiteracy which, if not taken care of will reach one billion mark by the end of century. It is an uphill task as there is no adequate infrastructure in these countries to combat illiteracy. But we must take note of the fact that while illiteracy has declined in proportion the number of illiterates has gone up due to population explosion in the

Third World. There is a high incidence of illiteracy among women, especially in the developing countries."

"What measures has the UNESCO taken to fight illiteracy?"

"Firstly, universalisation of primary education in order to contain ignorance at source. There has to be a basic political will on the part of governments concerned. If this is exercised, very significant results can be achieved. But that alone will not be sufficient if the literate sections of the population do not make their own contribution to the elimination of illiteracy. Educational institutions alone cannot do this. It should be a mobilization of all sections enforced by the political will of governments. Secondly, UNESCO has undertaken specific action in favour of adults. The only way to eliminate the problem is through the help of the international community; governments alone do not have the means. This is where UNESCO has stepped in with assistance. We started a campaign in Nicaragua which is almost a success. India's programme in this area has begun to show results."

"You discussed the New International Economic Order with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister. Would you like to say something on that?"

"UNESCO's main aim is to sensitise all problems and bridge inequalities of all kinds and improve relations with countries. The New Economic Order must minimize differences between countries, especially in education. One of the major struggles is against poverty. The struggle to educate men and women, to exercise their rights in all fields and reinforce cooperation among developing countries, especially in the fields of science and technology is going on. We will discuss these problems at the General Assembly in Belgrade next month." (September 1980)

On the question of UNESCO, reflective thinking on

communications as a social force there seems a lot of imbalance and communication gap between countries. Do you have a solution to the problem?

"Our efforts towards a new Information Order have highlighted the problems relating to the need to recognize the identities of all cultures. Unless a communications infrastructure is established in the developing countries, this would be difficult. Last April, UNESCO met in Paris to sort out the means to develop communication among countries not for dissemination alone but for education, culture, science and technology. For instance, the Pan African News Agency has been very useful. It has helped in a small way to establish equitable dissemination. In this sphere, the nonaligned group has made good efforts to bridge the gap, but this should be at regional and sub-regional levels.

"Here I would like to give importance to India's satellite programme. The recent launching needs to be maximized as much as possible. It is a triumph for the developing world and to India's self-reliance. India should play a vital role in UNESCO's programme."

"How far has the scheme of transfer of technology succeeded?"

"I am of the firm opinion that exchange of technology between developing countries should be reinforced. Those developing countries that are more advanced should deploy their technology to lesser developed nations, but it should be appropriate to their needs."

"Going back to question of the New Economic Order and the present inflation due to the high oil prices, how can developing countries contain inflationary problems and build modern infrastructures to meet demands?"

"It is a fact that the oil price hike has created numerous problems for the developing countries. It has also affected

the developed countries. Inflation poses serious problems for all. The developed countries will raise the cost of equipment imported by developing countries. On the other hand, the cost of raw materials is going down, which means balance of payments keeps deteriorating and equipment cost increases.

"The situation grows more catastrophic – the only way out perhaps is that developing countries come together and utilize their raw material and internal resources to fight the situation.

"I can see many solutions to problems through India which has the political will to assist lesser developed countries. UNESCO has a big task ahead and I am sure we can meet the situation. Looking back 33 years ago, we were just 50 members. Today we are 151. With the full cooperation of all, we will be able to tackle some of the problems. This is what I discussed with Mrs. Indira Gandhi. The Indian experience has opened the way for other countries to come to UNESCO" he said.

Germain Krull

A photographer, war correspondent, writer, business woman and now a Buddhist—this is the life story of Madame Germain Krull who came on a visit to India in 1968. She held an exhibition of photographs of Tibetan people in New Delhi.

The most exciting period in the busy life of this 72-year old woman was when she served as war correspondent with the 6th Army later with the South-East Asia Command under Lord Mountbatten. One of the two women correspondents with the Command, she had the unique experience of being flown with the Gorkha troops from one place to another.

After an exciting and tumultuous life it is but natural that Madame Krull should seek "peace and solace" she said, "what better place than India to do so."

Born of Polish parents while they were traveling to France, Madame Krull studied photography at Munich. She opened her own studio and did freelance work. She later moved to Berlin.

But the 'arty' atmosphere of Paris lured her there and in 1925 she became the only woman member of Photographic Artists Society in Paris. For 15 years she covered pictorial assignments for two popular French magazines. She also published books on art and art designs.

It was during these days that she met the French intellectual Andre Malraux. They both covered

assignments together. Madame Krull did all the photographs of Buddhist art for Malarux's book which was later published. She worked with him on a collection of international popular art.

This is Madame Krull's sixth visit to India. "I love this country because I find peace here," she says. She has visited Dharmasala and met the Dalai Lama and is impressed by the way the Tibetans have rehabilitated themselves at Mussoorie and Dalhousie.

"When one is as old as I am, one must live for others." Germaine Krull, press photographer par excellence, had come to India to 'retire'. "The time has come," she says, "to do something useful". What she has in mind is to work among Tibetan children.

No one could call the preceding years of her life useless. Ever since 1920s she has roamed the world, building up a graphic, searching record of how people live. And also how they die. She has been in the thick of many war-torn areas as a war correspondent. It all began in Munich where the young Germaine Krull first went from her native Poland to learn photography. From there she went to Paris.

She was a close associate of Andre Malraux and Jean Cocteau, having worked with them on several photographic assignments. Then as war-clouds gathered over Europe, Madame Krull joined the Free French Forces and saw action in the Congo. When her camera took her to Asia, she became an accredited photographer-correspondent with the South East Asia Command.

After the war she settled in Thailand, and tried her hand very successfully at running a large hotel. All the while her camera was busy, recording vignettes of the daily life of the Thais.

In between she fitted in some more wandering, including quite a number of visits to India. Somewhere

during this period, she became a Buddhist—"It is an uncomplicated means to peace"—and somewhere along the way she decided in favour of the simple life.

Her choice fell on India and on the Himalayas in particular; she planned to live somewhere near the hills and teach the Tibetan children. But her zest for life, and for turning her camera on it, has been too strong to let her settle, although her long-term plans remain unchanged. She has been wandering again, all over India and some of the vivid results of her tour were displayed at the Alliance Francaise here.

When Germaine Krull was in India earlier she had a big dream: to use her camera to help recapture the beleaguered traditions of Tibet. Her dream has come true.

She published the result of her photographic 'mission'—a book of photographs portraying all the rich and varied facets of the life of the Tibetan folk, showing how they are trying to adjust to the Indian locale and at the same time to preserve their own ways.

Germaine Krull has brought out this thought-provoking book with a purpose: "May it help to awaken the conscience of the world to save all that is left from the destruction of Tibetan culture and literature."

She is deeply committed to the Tibetan people. She first met them in 1962 when she wandered dismayed among the refugees here in Delhi with her camera. Germaine Krull was "so impressed by their simplicity and silent suffering" that she decided to devote her life to their cause.

She made India her home, she says, and she spends all her time among the Tibetans, "I have come under the spell of the refugee monks," she admits: "I want the world to know that the Lamas who are the keepers of age-old truth still endure—they should not be forgotten".

Miss Krull's book contains an outline of Tibet's history, as well as a survey of the present activities of the Tibetans living here and the arrangements for their rehabilitation. The splendid photographs bring home the message in vivid detail.

The book entitled *Hinayana* also has a portrait of the Dalai Lama, taken in his Swarg Ashram. He looks out from the page with the smiling face he presents to the world, reflecting little of his great anxiety for the people left back in his mountain kingdom.

Mussoorie has been Germaine Krull's love for long.

Pierre Cardin

The man who dresses Queen Farah Diba, Mia Farrow, Jacqueline Kennedy, Jean Moreau and a host of celebrities, the famous couturier Pierre Cardin was here once again in Delhi. His visit in March last year when he blazed a trail with the mini and wide leather belts is still fresh in the minds of the fashion conscious. This time Cardin has something new and a surprise when he will display his 1968 spring creations on Saturday evening.

The creator of the space style looked a little tired as he entered the lobby laden with packages and his five sleek models and business manager with him. Dressed in brown tweeds, brown has class. "It lends an air of distinction," he once said, though tired after his long flight from Paris, nevertheless cheerful, agreed with a smile to be interviewed. "Come up with me to my room," he said as we rode up the elevator.

Wonderful, he exclaimed, to his hosts as he looked around his room which of course had received a new look recently. Admiring the view from his window Cardin said: "This inspires me to create. It gives me ideas. Ah! the beautiful flowers," he sighed contentedly, "I have some dress of Indian Silk this time in my collection, you shall see," he warned trying to look mysterious. Most of the dress that he has brought were displayed at, 118, Fauborg St. Honore, Cardin's house of Haute Couture in Paris, last month. "This is my first show outside Paris and on Sunday

I go to New York to hold a show there," said France's most popular designer.

In his Paris salon he holds shows daily before 150 spectators, "and you will be surprised to know that the interest is for men's fashions," says the man who set the pace in men's wear. "Men like to dress, it is important for them. As for women we expect them to be well dressed" he says describing how particular men are about matching the cravat, chapeau, shoes, belts and handkerchief, with their suits.

"My best overseas customer is the Japanese and the American," he said, whose creations are a rage at Bonwit Teller's stores in the US adding, "I cannot show men's fashion here as I have not brought a boy to model them, men models are more expensive." "You see! This is why I had to find them here last time," explained Cardin. Marisse and Françoise, the two among the five mannequins who have come with him were in India last year and it was the two black-eyed, black haired models that wore the Indian Silk creations.

Starting 18 years ago the blonde long-haired Pierre Cardin, who studied architecture but later coming under the influence of Jean Cocteau, started designing costumes for Cocteau's plays. Taking dress designing as his real vocation the Venice-born Cardin joined Paquin and later Schiaparelli but it was with Christian Dior that the real Cardin emerged. His 'new look' and the flowing dresses became the rage.

There was no stopping Cardin's success from then on, he opened his houses of high fashion all over Paris. His 'Adam and Eve' are famous rendezvous for Europe's jet set. Cardin's 'Navy Blue', and 'Singular' the two perfumes, are the latest craze in Paris.

"What about the mini?" I asked.

"Fashions change like love and women" was his laughing reply. "I dress my women as they look," said Cardin who was guest of the late Mrs Pupul Jayakar, Chairman of Handicrafts & Handloom Corporation.

Margaret Lee Runbeck

An outstanding figure in American literature was in India on January '53. She is Margaret Lee Runbeck, the well-known novelist and short story writer. Indians are sure to have read her articles in one of the numerous American magazines to which she contributes: the *Reader's Digest*, *Good Housekeeping*, *This Week*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's* and many others.

Margaret Lee Runbeck, now on a six-month tour of India, sponsored by the World Literacy Committee under Point Four, is working with Dr. Frank Laubach. She plans to visit various educational institutions, among them the Isabella Thoburn College at Lucknow, to deliver lectures on the art of writing, on her own writing experiences, on feminine psychology, adornment, fiction and home-making.

Giving her first impressions of India, she said: "India is a wonderful country. We Americans have so much in common with it. I believe that America must understand your land and trust it completely. If Indians would let us teach them the 'know-how' of American life, they can give us an insight into their hearts."

Asked if the change of Government would make a difference in American Technical Point Four aid to India, Miss Runbeck, a Republican replied emphatically, "No. No change will be made," she said. "The policy has been set by the people of America and the new administration will not revoke it."

Margaret Lee Runbeck started writing at the age of thirteen and her first assignment was a newspaper column for *The Washington Post*. She has kept on writing ever since and has never thought of being anything else but a writer. She has sixteen books to her credit, the first of which *For Today Only* was published thirteen years ago. Lately, she has turned to fiction and her first novel is *A Hungry Man's Dreams*. She has also written two hundred and fifty short stories.

Her early books on juvenile and child psychology published by *Good Housekeeping*, *Homekeeping*, *Reader's Digest* have had a strange effect and through them hundreds of children have been adopted into American homes. She herself has an adopted daughter whom she received into her home when the baby was ten years old. 'My little girl', she says fondly, "is seventeen years old today and in High School. It is possible to love a child not your own even without a marriage," she adds humourously.

Her first job was on the *Christian Science Monitor*. Later, she joined the staff of the *Christian Herald* and stayed there for four years. "I have had to go through all the hard experiences of a newspaper job, but it was fun," she recalls.

Born in Midwest, Iowa, she graduated from Chicago University and has travelled all over Europe more than once. She lives in her country home, just outside Boston, with her adopted daughter whom she calls 'Boo'.

This is a collection of interviews of major personalities of modern times. They include a galaxy of men and women ranging from national figures and international leaders to writers, thinkers, diplomats and nobel laureates. Erudite and entertaining, these conversations bristle with the eloquence of the individuals as well as the author's skill in drawing them out. A fascinating read, this collection brings to the reader an exciting period of history that has just gone by.

K.P. Bhanumathy, journalist and former correspondent of All India Radio, was also a popular columnist. Her columns have appeared in major national newspapers including *National Herald*, *Times of India*, *Hindustan Times*, *The Hindu* and *The Statesman*. Widely travelled, Bhanumathy was particularly known for her fascinating interviews during a long career spanning over five decades.



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